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Food Stamp Program Client Enrollment Assistance Demonstration Projects: Interim Evaluation Report



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3101 Park Center Drive
Second Floor
Alexandria, VA 22302

**Food Stamp Program
Client Enrollment Assistance
Demonstration Projects:
Interim Evaluation Report**

Gretchen Schafft, Ph.D.

Based on research conducted by: Gary Chisum,
Beatrice de la Brosse, Marilyn Madden, William
Millsap and Gretchen Schafft

A Product of
LTG Associates, Inc.

6930 Carroll Avenue
Suite 410
Takoma Park, MD 20912

875 E. Canal
Suite 1
Turlock, CA 95380

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624) called for grants to fund demonstration projects that would identify barriers to Food Stamp Program (FSP) participation among specified target populations and test methodologies of client-assistance. The first of these grants were competitively awarded to 16 nonprofit organizations whose demonstration projects began in the fall of 1993. Ten additional grants were made in 1994 to public and private nonprofit groups.

These demonstrations provide food stamp outreach and client enrollment assistance to rural, elderly, and homeless populations, low-income working families with children, Native American and non-English-speaking minorities. In their proposals, each applicant identified barriers they believed many in the target group encountered when they considered enrolling, or attempted to enroll, in the FSP. They proposed ways to assist these clients to overcome these barriers.

The evaluation of the demonstrations has asked two main questions:

- What are the barriers that clients experience in accessing the FSP?
- What methods of outreach and client enrollment assistance can be shown to help overcome these barriers?

The authorizing legislation for these demonstrations requires an outside evaluation of the projects. This is the interim report to the Congress of the progress of these demonstrations and their evaluation. While it discusses all 26 of the projects, the reported preliminary findings apply to only the first 16 demonstrations. Most of these demonstration projects have concluded their activities, but follow-up data are still being received from several of them.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

There was uniform agreement among clients from all target groups interviewed in the evaluation study that the FSP is very important to them and a major source of nutrition. Eligibility workers stated that their work is very important in reducing hunger and solving human problems. However, barriers remain for some in accessing the FSP. These are:

- **Changing patterns of work make it difficult to project income.** Manual laborers increasingly find it impossible to project how many days of work they will have in a given period because of the temporary assignments they are given through "labor pools" or temporary work placement centers. Many employers do not provide documentation of hours worked. This is a dilemma for both eligibility workers and clients, and, as a result, many laborers choose not to participate.
- **Recent immigrants and refugees are fearful of participating because of a potential impact on their resident status.** People newly arrived from other countries are afraid that their hearings for permanent residency status will be affected by a record of accepting government benefits. They choose not to apply rather than risk this negative outcome.

- **Low benefits affect potential food stamp applicants.** The elderly and the working poor with few children do not always find it advantageous to spend time and money in the application process.
- **Using food stamps in stores where others know them inhibits many from participating in the FSP.** There is a growing feeling of resentment toward people who use government benefit programs in communities throughout the U.S. Many eligibility workers reported receiving telephone calls from community residents complaining about people using food stamps. Clients reported being challenged in the grocery store by other customers about their right to use food stamps.
- **The food stamp application itself can be a disincentive to some people who would like to receive benefits.** The application forms for the FSP are often complex, particularly if they are combined forms used for multiple programs. Some people who begin to apply do not complete the application because they become discouraged with the reading, writing, and organizational skills required.

It is not possible to prioritize the barriers that clients identify as important, for a barrier to one client is not a problem to another. Improvements can be made in service delivery procedures, but community attitudes are more difficult to change. Many methods were helpful to clients and overcame barriers and disincentives to using the FSP. These included:

- **Outreach workers used as links between the client and the food stamp office offer important services.** They help potential recipients overcome the client's fear of failure, supplement the client's skills needed to apply for food stamps, and bring needed information to hard-to-reach groups of needy people. The application for food stamps can be complicated, and outreach workers from nonprofit organizations are not always trained sufficiently to do an accurate job. Most of the time, however, they are able to work with populations that others may find difficult to make the process more amenable to the needs of eligible clients. They can spread information, overcome community stigmas, reach otherwise isolated individuals and families, advocate for those who cannot do so for themselves, and train food stamp employees to work with hard-to-reach population groups.
- **Contacting clients at another benefit program office to enroll them in the FSP was an effective way to reach large numbers of people.** Outreach workers provided client assistance at a Medicaid office to clients who did not know they were eligible for food stamps. This combination of information dissemination and client assistance was cost-effective. It generated less information about the nature of barriers to the FSP than did other projects, however.
- **Providing assistance to homeless and mentally ill and confused people in shelters and feeding sites overcame many different problems and barriers to the FSP.** People living in shelters often are experiencing many different problems. An outreach worker who provides assistance at the site can help people who have literacy problems, who are afraid of entering offices, or who may be too disorganized to provide documentation on themselves. In a non-threatening atmosphere, staff from nonprofit organizations can be very effective.

- **Bringing a food stamp office employee to an institution or shelter to conduct eligibility interviews can cut transportation costs and inherent difficulties that some have in mobility.** For elderly clients or those who are disabled through mental or physical illness, having a representative of the food stamp agency come to the residence or shelter is very helpful.

At some sites, the need for food stamps was smaller than anticipated. Some migrant groups were aware of the benefit and had already enrolled in the program. In some rural areas, people were managing through traditional means of gardening and sharing with family and neighbors.

A great deal of fear exists for many persons about the symbolic nature of food stamps as a sign of their own decline in the social structure of their communities. By contrast, however, for many others it appears that food stamps promote self-sufficiency and are a sign that they are not dependent on group meals provided by a charity, that they have the right to shop in regular grocery stores for nutritious food, and, that with the help of food stamps, they can provide for themselves by budgeting carefully.

The first sixteen demonstration projects fulfilled their charge by serving the designated target populations, trying a variety of outreach and client assistance methods, and collecting information in support of the FCS evaluation. At this preliminary stage, the projects have provided data for continuing analysis which will be combined with that of an additional ten projects to provide a final outcome evaluation at the end of the demonstrations.

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report comprises the interim evaluation results of 26 research demonstration projects authorized under Public Law 101-624, entitled the "Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act" of 1990. Section 1759 of the Act authorized funding during fiscal years 1992 through 1995 of competitive grants to public and private nonprofit organizations to develop and test food stamp outreach and client assistance efforts designed "to increase participation by eligible low-income households in the food stamp program." The Act further instructed that these outreach and client assistance efforts "shall be targeted towards members of rural, elderly, and homeless populations, low-income working families with children, and non-English speaking minorities." Finally, it directed that a sufficient number of projects be evaluated to be able to "determine the effectiveness of the projects and the techniques employed by the projects."

This is the first interim report to Congress on the progress of the funded demonstration projects' outreach and client assistance efforts. This report of the projects and their evaluation is organized into five sections. The legislative history of client assistance within the Food Stamp Program (FSP) is found in Section I, the goals of the 26 demonstration projects as described in the authorizing legislation in Section II, the objectives of the evaluation in Section III, the implementation of the demonstration projects and an assessment of their effectiveness to date in Section IV, and the preliminary analysis of the outcomes of the demonstrations in Section V.

A. LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW

The roots of the present FSP were established in 1935 during the Depression as part of the broad authority provided in Public Law 74-320 mandating that the Secretary of Agriculture encourage the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities or products (US Senate 1985, 4). By May of 1939, some 11 million needy people were receiving Federal food assistance through

direct commodity donations. During that same year, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) introduced the first FSP. The idea was simple; participants would buy food stamps which in turn could be exchanged for specific food items worth more than the purchase price of the stamps. These were primarily surplus foods being produced by the agricultural sector. This program operated from 1939 until 1943, by which time wartime demands had eliminated existing food surpluses. Nevertheless, this initial effort established the basic parameters for the subsequent USDA FSP and addressed both the issue of agricultural over-production and the need to alleviate hunger in various populations across the nation.

The modern FSP began as a set of pilot projects initiated by an Executive Order of President John F. Kennedy on January 21, 1961, the day after his inauguration, as part of his plan for national economic growth (US Senate 1985, 3). These projects were designed to improve the diets of those in need and to distribute surplus foods. Like its earlier counterpart, this FSP permitted people to exchange cash for coupons, thereby increasing their purchasing power for food. The projects were deemed a success in improving the nutritional status of the low-income participants and they encouraged a broader, more inclusive FSP (DeVault and Pitts 1984, 547).¹

What had begun as a demonstration effort was enacted into a nationwide program with the passage of the Food Stamp Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-525). However, unlike the pre-war FSP, participants were not restricted to purchasing only basic commodity foods; food stamp coupons could be used in food stores generally, although the purchase of non-food items was disallowed because the goal of the legislation was to improve nutrition. Under the 1964 Act, the Federal government paid the entire cost of food stamp benefits with administrative costs shared with the States, whose participation was optional. Eligibility standards were also determined by the States with allotment levels established by the USDA (US Senate 1985, 22).

In 1969, President Nixon established a Presidential Commission to study the extent of hunger and malnutrition in the United States. Based on the Commission's findings, he then launched a pilot project which permitted individuals with incomes of less than \$30.00 a month to receive food stamps free of charge, modifying the purchase requirement for food stamps. The Food and Nutrition Service also was established at this time within the USDA to coordinate child and adult food programs, including the FSP (US Senate 1985).

With the reauthorization of the program under the Food Stamp Act of 1971 (P.L. 91-671), Congress made major amendments to the program. These amendments established uniform national standards for participating households, required basic allotments for eligible households to be tied to annual food price inflation, and, for the first time, "directed State Agencies to initiate educational programs designed to inform potential participants of the program to insure the participation of eligible households" (U.S. Senate 1985, 38). With half of the client assistance costs being shared with the Federal government, the States were required by the Congress to conduct outreach. In the first few years following the enactment of this provision, USDA did little to enforce it, however, and many States undertook little outreach activity. This led to a national action lawsuit, in which a Federal court ruled in 1974 that all States must undertake significant food stamp outreach efforts. Federal regulations prescribing State outreach activities were strengthened further in 1979 (AARP 1991, 46).

In 1973 as part of The Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act (P.L. 93-86), Congress transformed the FSP into a legislatively mandated, nationwide program, increasing the maximum benefit level from \$65 to \$106 a month for a family of four with little or no income. With the passage of P.L. 93-86, the FSP increasingly was seen as an income supplement, as well as a nutrition program, providing a safety net to the truly needy as well as to the working poor. This aspect of the program was further strengthened by the Food Stamp Act of 1977 which eliminated

the purchase requirement for food stamps, establishing the modern form of the food stamp benefit, while simultaneously tightening program eligibility and benefits in other respects. This combination of changes in the 1977 Act caused a moderate increase in size of the food stamp caseload, as anticipated, and a pronounced shift in caseload composition. The population participating in the FSP was now, on average, much poorer, more Southern, and more elderly.

The legislation re-authorizing the Food Stamp Act of 1977, included as part of the 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (P.L. 97-35), mandated a number of changes in the operation of the FSP, including the elimination of Federal funding for food stamp outreach activities. Specifically, outreach was made a "non-allowable" State administrative cost, and, as a result, State outreach activity virtually ceased. The 1981 Federal budget cuts also terminated the Community Services Administration, which had funded many local outreach efforts under the Community Food and Nutrition Program, resulting in the elimination of most local outreach efforts (see AARP 1991, 47). The U.S. Conference of Mayors reported that the use of food stamps declined by one million participants between 1980 and 1987, while during the same period one million additional persons were classified as being below the poverty level (USCM 1988).

In 1987, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-77) reversed the previous total restriction on food stamp outreach and permitted State agencies to obtain Federal matching funds to conduct outreach to homeless individuals and families. Expanding on these activities, the Micky Leland Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-435):

...overturned the provision of the 1981 law that had barred the use of federal funds to pay for half of the cost of state outreach activities. The 1988 legislation made food stamp outreach directed at *all* types of low-income households--rather than just the homeless--a state option (AARP 1991:47).

Finally, the reauthorization of the FSP included in the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624), authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to "make grants competitively awarded to public or private nonprofit organizations to fund food stamp client

assistance demonstration projects and related evaluations in areas of the United States to increase participation by eligible households in the food stamp program" (Section 1759 [1][A]). These special food stamp demonstration grants were authorized for the 1992-1995 fiscal years, not to exceed \$5 million dollars. The legislation also provided for an independent evaluation of the demonstrations.

B. FOOD STAMP PROGRAM CLIENT ENROLLMENT ASSISTANCE EFFORTS

Food stamp outreach has been a part of the FSP almost from its inception and has always been focused on ensuring that clients are served regardless of their age, status of shelter, geographic location, or other factors related to need. A few of the recent efforts are described here in order to place the current evaluation in context.

1. State-Initiated Outreach with 50% Federal Cost Reimbursement

The present program of providing matching Federal funds to States that choose the option to initiate and run FSP outreach was legislated in the Hunger Prevention Act of 1988, with rules being issued by USDA on January 7, 1989. Under this option, a participating State presents a proposal which is reviewed and monitored at the Regional office; however, few States have taken this option.

2. Food and Consumer Services (FCS) Initiatives

The FCS has pursued several programs of food stamp outreach and client assistance over the past decade. These efforts have been targeted to particular population groups who have been consistently under-represented in the ranks of FSP participants. Some of these efforts have been coordinated with other government agencies, and some have utilized grants to nonprofit organizations initiated by FCS alone. Grants of various sizes have supported efforts to develop

approaches to making the FSP program more appropriate and accessible to hard-to-reach populations. These approaches have included:

- Spanish language FSP forms/notices;
- Bilingual eligibility workers and interpreters, including staff who speak Spanish, Navajo, and other Native American languages;
- Extended office hours for migrants;
- Regular eligibility worker training on Indian Reservations; and
- Ongoing cooperation with and distribution of program informational materials to community action organizations, migrant service centers, Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) offices, Bureau of Indian Affairs offices, and Tribal organizations.

In the late 1980's, FCS initiated a limited program of small grants to local, nongovernmental organizations to develop and test methods of reaching and helping homeless persons to participate in the FSP. Research findings had shown that homeless persons had particular difficulty in being enrolled and using the FSP, and that only 18 percent of homeless persons who use services were actually receiving food stamps (Burt and Cohen, 1989). During the period 1989-91, FCS awarded eleven such "Homeless Outreach Grants" to a diverse group of nonprofit organizations throughout the country, which developed a variety of food stamp outreach and assistance methods oriented to homeless persons.

3. The Texas Department of Human Services, Valley Information Project (VIP)

The first USDA grant for outreach and client assistance provided under authority of the 1990 FSP reauthorization was a multi-year grant in 1992 to a "public-private partnership" composed of the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS), the nonprofit grassroots organization Valley Interfaith, and the University of Texas Pan American (UTPA). The resulting Valley Information Project (VIP) tested the feasibility of this kind of broad, public-private partnership, providing information and assistance to low-income, mainly Hispanic, residents of Hidalgo and Cameron Counties in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

The VIP recruited several hundred volunteers, primarily UTPA students and residents of the “*colonias*” which were the main target areas for the project. The *colonias* are unincorporated rural subdivisions with settlements of anywhere from a few dozen to over 2,000 people, but with seriously inadequate housing, utilities, and services. The project volunteers received training from TDHS staff on FSP enrollment procedures and requirements, while Valley Interfaith staff provided community contacts and training on means of communicating and assisting clients living in the *colonias*. UTPA managed logistics for the project. An important part of the project was the effort to develop information and understanding on the specific kinds of barriers faced by *colonias* dwellers in attempting to access the FSP, and to develop means of addressing these barriers with TDHS offices and other local agencies.

4. Joint SSI/FSP Demonstrations

The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 required a study of coordinated delivery of food stamp delivery at Social Security Administration (SSA) offices. Finding that this coordination was not working well, the General Accounting Office recommended changes in the coordination process and “taking additional steps to ensure that applicants and recipients of SSA programs are adequately informed of food stamp availability” (USGAO, September 1992). As a result of these concerns about inter-program coordination, FCS and SSA entered into a cooperative agreement in 1994 providing for a limited number of food stamp outreach projects to be conducted within a newly awarded round of client assistance demonstration grants for the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program administered by the SSA. Currently, seven of these joint food stamp/SSI outreach and client assistance demonstrations are underway throughout the country, administered by SSA and targeted to underserved members of the SSI client population groups, elderly and disabled persons.

C. BACKGROUND TO CURRENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The first cycle of funding, provided for explicitly in the 1992 FSP appropriation, allowed FCS to award 16 grants in 1993. A second funding cycle of ten sites began operation in October 1994 provided from Food Stamp Program Section 17 general research funds. Both sets of demonstrations were targeted to the same population groups in order to demonstrate what the grantees believed were effective methods to overcome barriers to food stamp participation. This demonstration initiative provided the first substantial opportunity to examine and compare barriers to access in the FSP from information gathered from field sites. The outside evaluators have provided technical assistance to all the grantees to help them collect data that will be useful in assessing the success of the various techniques of reaching hard-to-reach populations.

II. THE CURRENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

A. DEMONSTRATION PROJECT GOALS

As a group of demonstrations established under a single policy objective, the 26 distinct projects have certain broad goals in common. In this section is each of these four goals of the client assistance projects described:

- Producing a demonstration;
- Providing informational outreach;
- Assisting clients through specific methods; and
- Establishing public/private partnerships.

1. Demonstrations

These demonstration projects provided a wide range of preapplication assistance in ways that had not been tried before by nonprofit groups. Each of the demonstration projects was designed to incorporate both client assistance and research.

As demonstrations, the projects were designed to initiate actions and follow them closely, gathering necessary information on their process and outcomes for evaluation purposes. The critical features in the demonstrations were the determination of what aspects of the methods used to reach and assist the population worked or did not work, and what characteristics of the environment in which the demonstration took place influenced outcomes.

2. Informational Outreach

The first task of those concerned about providing access to the FSP is to inform people of the program and their potential eligibility. It is important, therefore, that no group among those who are eligible to participate be systematically excluded or find it more difficult than others to become enrolled to participate. Congress has directed the USDA to monitor participation in the

FSP regularly to identify patterns of nonparticipation and conduct research to determine the reasons for nonparticipation among those potentially eligible groups who are under-represented. The needs of these groups have been addressed by informational outreach through Federal, Regional, and State FSP offices.

3. Client Enrollment Assistance

Many other barriers to service, in addition to a lack of information, have been identified by the FSP and advocacy groups. Client assistance activities that go beyond providing basic information about the FSP are increasingly designed to address these specific “barriers,” defined here as:

Those characteristics of clients, practices of agencies, behavior of gatekeepers, and physical or geographic conditions that inhibit or exclude clients from obtaining services for which they are eligible.

Clients who know of the FSP and of their potential eligibility, still may have difficulty applying to the program for a variety of reasons. Physically, they may be unable to get to the food stamp office because they are unwell or lack transportation. They may be too confused from mental illness or too weak from physical illness to be able to gather required documentation without help or to fill out an application. Others may not have the literacy or language skills needed to complete the application process and may not be able to manage the face-to-face requirements of the application process without help. The FSP has made provisions for clients with these problems by translating applications, creating materials that explain how to make an application, and allowing trusted friends or relatives of the client to be an “authorized representative” to collect the stamps or shop with them. USDA has funded mobile vans to bring the FSP closer to the clients and has funded demonstration projects to find out how best to help efficiently and effectively. The food stamp office interview may be waived if the household is unable to appoint an authorized representative and no household member is able to go to the food

stamp office because of age or disability. In these cases, the eligibility worker can either conduct a telephone interview or make a home visit.

In these demonstration projects, nonprofit agencies enlarged upon the innovative changes that have been incorporated into the food stamp regulations by providing enrollment assistance tailored to the needs of specific groups. One of the goals of the demonstrations was to show that client assistance could not only overcome barriers to access, but could identify those barriers more completely and effectively through these projects than has been possible in other research.

4. Public-Private Partnerships

Private, nonprofit service providers and advocacy groups have often petitioned public agencies for the rights of their clients and have monitored governmental programs to help ensure they were attending to their stated objectives. The results of such activities have been largely positive, but also at times have created adversarial, instead of cooperative, relationships. Changing the tenor of the relationships between private nonprofit and public nonprofit agencies for the benefit of the public and clients is one of the goals of modern government. In these demonstrations, projects were encouraged to establish and demonstrate a variety of public/private partnerships.

B. DIVERSITY AND COMMON ELEMENTS OF THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The 26 Food Stamp Outreach and Client Assistance Demonstration Projects represented agencies from rural and urban areas and the full range of target populations identified in the authorizing legislation, including:

- Working people with low incomes;

Table 1.
Food Stamp Program Client Enrollment Assistance Demonstration Project Sites

Sites	Location	Activities	Specified Population Group(s)
1. Arizona Community Action Association, Inc., Phoenix, AZ	Rural	Language-specific materials developed in partnership with State FSP agency; Off-site application process with FSP personnel; 1-800 number	Native Americans
2. Southern California Interfaith Hunger Coalition, Los Angeles, CA	Urban	Advocacy; Language-specific assistance; Language-specific materials; Partnership with nonprofit agencies	Homeless People Non-English-Speaking Minorities (Russian and Middle Eastern) Elderly People Low-Income Working Families
3. Colorado Coalition for the Homeless Denver, CO	Urban/Rural	Advocacy; Application delivery; Appointment scheduling; Authorized representative; Food stamp training to other nonprofit agencies; Language-specific assistance	Homeless People Migrant People
4. D.C. Hunger Action Washington, DC	Urban	Advocacy; Door-to-door contact; Language-specific assistance; Language-specific materials; Public/group presentations; Targeted assistance sites; Telephone assistance	Homeless People Non-English-Speaking Minorities (Hispanic and Asian)
5. Immigrant Center, Honolulu, HI	Urban	Advocacy; Appointment scheduling; Language-specific assistance; Language-specific newspaper, radio and TV announcements; Language-specific materials; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; Public/group presentations; 1-800 number	Non-English-Speaking Minorities (Vietnamese American, Chinese American, Korean American, Filipino American and People from American Samoan)
6. Project Bread - The Walk for Hunger, Inc., Boston, MA	Urban	Advocacy; Development of public service video in partnership with State FSP agency; Language-specific notices; Partnership with other nonprofit agencies; Partnership with State FSP agency; Public/group presentations; 1-800 number	Low-Income Working Families Non-English Speaking Minorities (Hispanic and Asian) Elderly People
7. Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc., Greenville, MS	Rural	Advocacy; Application delivery; Appointment scheduling; Authorized representative; Door-to-door contact; Home visits; Newspaper ads and articles; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; Transportation	Low-Income Working Families (African American) Elderly People(African-American)
8. East Bloomfield Central School District, East Bloomfield, NY	Rural	Advocacy; Appointment scheduling; Door-to-door contact; Home visits; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; Targeted assistance sites; Transportation	Low-Income Working Families Migrant People
9. Community Food Resource Center, Inc., New York, NY	Urban	Advocacy; Application delivery; Co-location with Medicaid office; Targeted assistance sites	Low-Income Working Families Elderly People People with Disabilities
10. InterReligious Council of Central NY, Syracuse, NY	Rural	Advocacy; Messages in print media; Transportation; Volunteers	Low-Income Working Families Elderly People
11. Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, Morristown, TN	Rural	Newspaper ads, fliers, mailings; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; Public/group presentations; Targeted assistance sites; 1-800 number; Telephone assistance	Low-Income Working Families Elderly People
12. West Tennessee Legal Services, Inc., Jackson, TN	Rural	Advocacy; Fliers; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; Public/group presentations; Targeted assistance sites; Telephone assistance; Transportation; Volunteers	Low-Income Working Families (African American) Elderly People (African American)
13. The Daily Planet, Richmond, VA	Urban	Advocacy; Flyers and Posters; Off-site application with FSP personnel; Public/group presentations	Homeless People

Table 1.
Food Stamp Program Client Enrollment Assistance Demonstration Project Sites (continued)

Sites	Location	Activities	Specified Population Group(s)
14. Central Vermont Community Action Council, Inc., Barre, VT	Rural	Door-to-door contact; Home visits; Volunteers	Low-Income Working Families Elderly People
15. Fremont Public Association, Seattle, WA	Urban/Rural	Advocacy; Authorized representative; Visits to individuals where they find shelter; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; 1-800 number; Telephone assistance	Homeless People Low-Income Working Families
16. Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council, Inc., Independence, WI	Rural	Home visits; Newspaper articles, flyers, posters, radio and TV; Public/group presentations; Targeted assistance sites; 1-800 number; Telephone assistance; Transportation	Low-Income Working Families Elderly People Homeless People
17. Food Bank of North Central Arkansas, Norfolk, AR	Rural	Advocacy; Home visits; Radio and newspaper ads and articles; Targeted assistance sites; Telephone assistance; Transportation; Volunteers	Low-Income Working Families Elderly People
18. San Francisco Dept. of Social Services, CA (Public Food Stamp Program Agency Grantee)	Urban	Appointment scheduling; Language-specific assistance; Partnership with nonprofit agencies	Low-Income Working Families Non-English-Speaking Minorities (Hispanic and Asian)
19. Center for Employment Training, San Jose, CA	Urban/Rural	Language-specific assistance; Food stamp training to other nonprofits; Language-specific radio announcements; Off-site application process with FSP personnel; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; Telephone contacts; Transportation	Non-English-Speaking Minority (Hispanic)
20. DC Hunger Action (2), Washington, DC	Urban	Advocacy; Application delivery; Home visits; Flyers, newspaper announcements and mailings; Partnership with Ameri-Corps; Group presentations; Targeted assistance sites; Telephone assistance	Elderly People People with AIDS who have become disabled.
21. Cambodian Association of Illinois, Chicago, IL	Urban	Advocacy; Home visits; Language-specific assistance; Language-specific materials, newspaper articles, and radio announcements; Partnership with other nonprofit agencies; Public/ group presentations; Telephone assistance	Non-English-Speaking Minorities (Refugees from Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos, Vietnam and Chinese Americans))
22. Penquis Community Action Program, Bangor, ME	Rural	Advocacy; Home visits; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; Telephone contact from list supplied by State Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program	Low-Income Working Families Elderly People People with Disabilities
23. Community Food Resource Center, Inc. (2), New York, NY	Urban	Appointment scheduling; Co-location with unemployment and utility offices and senior centers	Low-Income Working Families (And Those Recently Unemployed) Elderly People People with Disabilities
24. Outside In, Portland, OR	Urban	Advocacy; Visits to individuals where they find shelter; Off-site application process with FSP personnel;	Homeless Youth
25. Green Thumb Food for Health, Rapid City, SD	Rural	Advocacy; Home visits; Newspaper, radio and TV announcements; Flyers, posters, and mailings; Partnership with State FSP agency; Portable PC hardware and printers; Public/group presentations; Software development; Targeted assistance sites; 1-800 number;	Elderly People
26. Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia, Norfolk, VA	Rural	Application delivery; Home visits; Newspaper articles; Partnership with nonprofit agencies; Public/group presentations; Targeted assistance sites; Transportation; Volunteers	Elderly People

Table 2.
Range of Methods Used in Food Stamp Client Enrollment Assistance Demonstration

METHOD SITE	ELECTRONIC MEDIA	VOLUNTEERS	FACILITATING ACCESS	TRAINING	COMMUNITY EDUCATION	PRE-SCREEN ASSISTANCE	INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE	BENEFIT APPEALS
1 PHOENIX, AZ	•				•			
2 LOS ANGELES, CA	•			•	•	•	•	•
3 DENVER, CO			•	•	•	•	•	•
4 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA [1]				•	•	•	•	•
5 HONOLULU, HI	•			•	•	•	•	•
6 BOSTON, MA	•			•	•	•	•	
7 GREENVILLE, MS			•	•	•	•	•	
8 BLOOMFIELD, NY			•	•		•	•	
9 NEW YORK CITY [1]				•		•		•
10 SYRACUSE, NY		•	•		•			
11 MORRISTOWN, TN				•	•	•	•	
12 JACKSON, TN.		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
13 RICHMOND, VA			•	•	•	•	•	•
14 BARRE, VT		•				•	•	
15 SEATTLE, WA			•	•	•	•	•	•
16 INDEPENDENCE, WI	•		•	•	•	•	•	
17 NORFOLK, AR	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
18 SAN FRANCISCO, CA			•	•	•	•	•	
19 SAN JOSE, CA	•		•	•	•	•	•	
20 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (2)		AmeriCorps	•	•	•	•	•	•
21 CHICAGO, IL	•		•	•	•	•	•	
22 BANGOR, ME			•			•	•	•
23 NEW YORK CITY (2)						•	•	•
24 PORTLAND, OR			•			•	•	•
25 RAPID CITY, SD	•		•	•	•	•	•	
26 NORFOLK, VA.		•	•	•	•	•	•	

Table 3.
Number of Demonstration Projects,
by Types of Activities Used to Reach Specified Population Groups*

ACTIVITY	POPULATION RURAL	ELDERLY AND DISABLED	HOMELESS	LOW-INCOME WORKING FAMILIES	NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING MINORITIES
ELECTRONIC MEDIA	6	4	1	5	5
VOLUNTEERS	5	5	0	4	0
FACILITATING ACCESS	12	8	4	6	3
TRAINING	12	10	5	9	7
COMMUNITY EDUCATION	13	10	5	8	8
PRE-SCREENING ASSISTANCE	15	13	6	13	7
INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE	12	10	6	10	7
BENEFIT APPEALS	3	5	5	6	4

* A demonstration site may be represented more than once in each activity category because most project sites served more than one specified population group.

All of the projects, regardless of the targeted group or the client assistance strategies they were testing, followed a general process of client identification and assistance described visually in Figure I. The agency staffs in all projects engaged potentially-eligible clients in groups or individually, provided help in filling out individual food stamp applications, and referred those people who were interested and expressed need for food stamps to the local food stamp agency. Throughout the process of client assistance, unanticipated difficulties arose that caused many clients to discontinue the application. Many projects identified such unanticipated barriers to the application process and intervened with other appropriate methods of client enrollment assistance. By verifying the number of assisted clients who were accepted into the FSP, project staff were able to determine the effectiveness of their assistance methods.

Although the process of engaging and assisting clients was similar for all of the demonstration sites, the projects themselves were unique. Each site had different staffing patterns, community structure, agency organization, and experience with the FSP that individualized their approach and influenced the degree to which they could successfully test components of it. Some agencies were very close to the communities in which they have been working, while others subcontracted to agencies with which they previously had had little contact. In some projects there was a single focus, while in others the target populations differed in critical aspects.

THE CLIENT ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION PROCESS

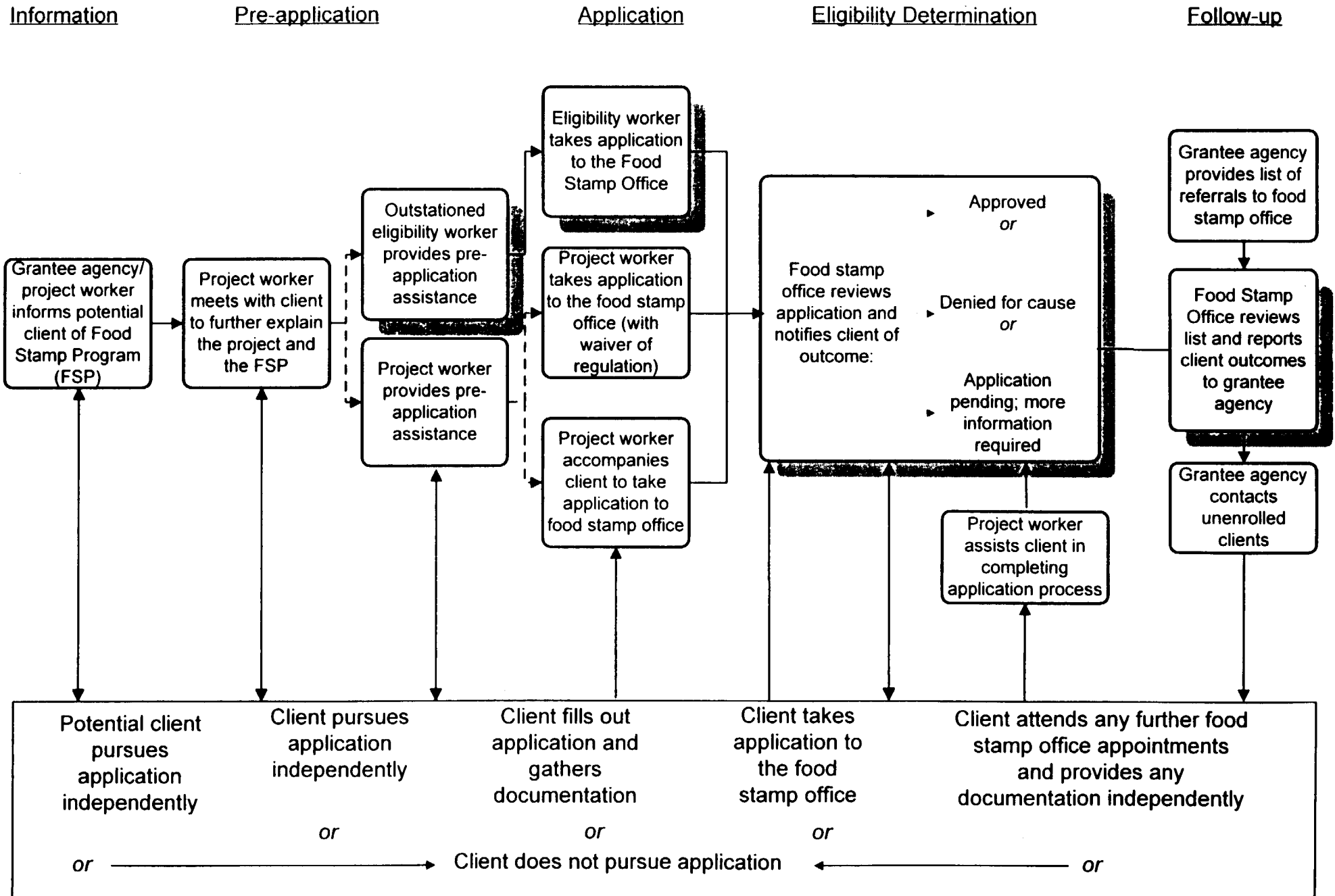


FIGURE 1

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The demonstration projects addressed the four broad goals described in the previous section. The objectives of the evaluation component of this demonstration effort, an integral part of the authorizing legislation in the 1990 Farm Bill, are addressed in this section.

Problems of access and reasons why many potentially-eligible clients are hesitant or find it difficult to enter into the public benefit systems are not easily studied through systematic survey research. Allin and Beebout (1989, xi) stated "...we may know who does not participate, but we cannot be certain about the underlying reason why." They suggested that understanding these decision processes "requires a less structured and more probing method of data collection than a survey of households." Such a method of data collection and evaluation was undertaken with these demonstration projects.

A formative evaluation was put in place as each demonstration project began, so that evaluators could observe how the projects implemented their proposed methodologies for providing client enrollment assistance. Aided by the evaluators, each project sought to establish meaningful procedures to collect data on the numbers of clients they contacted, those they referred to the FSP, those who applied for food stamps, and those who subsequently were enrolled as FSP participants. Data on the first 16 demonstration projects are included in the description found in Appendix A-1. Outcomes of the evaluation of all 26 projects will be presented when all projects have ended.

A. OBJECTIVE ONE: GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PROBLEMS OF FOOD STAMP ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Previous studies of nonparticipation in the FSP using survey data have identified patterns of nonparticipation. A short review of some of the previous research findings places the methods and selected target groups seen in the current demonstrations in context.²

1. Studies of Participation/Nonparticipation in the FSP

Two sources of information help explain why people who are presumed eligible by virtue of low income and other characteristics may not participate in the FSP. The first are studies of participants in the program. These studies do not directly address nonparticipation, but infer the characteristics of eligible persons who do not participate as the inverse of those who do. They offer some predictive value about the demographics of nonparticipants but do not go directly to eligible nonparticipants to ascertain the reasons for nonparticipation. These studies indicate that families with children, African Americans, those receiving other welfare benefits, and people with very low incomes are among those who participate most frequently in the FSP. Elderly people, non-white Hispanics, the working poor, those slightly above the poverty line who would have the smallest benefit, and families with few children are those who use the program least (Beebout 1990; Trippe and Doyle 1989; Trippe 1995).

Studies, which are limited in number, directly asking persons who are presumed eligible why they do not participate, are the second source of information. They have found that insufficient information, administrative problems with the applications, disinclination to deal with local food stamp offices, uncertainty about eligibility, and small benefits have been disincentives to participation (Coe 1983). A later study found that many nonparticipating eligible persons did not want the benefits, did not have correct information about the FSP, or perceived or had experienced problems with the program (Allin and Beebout 1989) (USGAO 1990).

2. Understanding Problems of Access

The literature on nonparticipation in the FSP indicates some of the reasons why some clients may have difficulty accessing the FSP and suggest possible ways to reduce barriers. Information gaps indicate that better communication between the benefit programs and those who are potentially eligible for the program may be needed. Effective information can be combined

with assistance in application procedures to make the FSP message clearer, more engaging, and the procedures for obtaining the benefits more streamlined and friendly. Eligible persons will only apply for the FSP if they know of their eligibility, understand how to enroll, and perceive the program to be worth the effort and cost of transportation, childcare, or other expenses it takes to participate. In other words, the perceived benefits of participating must be more than the effort and related costs needed to do so.

B. OBJECTIVE TWO: IDENTIFY/DOCUMENT/DESCRIBE DETERRENTS TO PARTICIPATION IN THE FSP AMONG SPECIFIC POPULATION GROUPS

Deterrents to participation vary among the target groups, and, therefore, effective methods to overcome them are tailored to fit the characteristics of the target groups and their lifestyles, as well as their financial and physical constraints. The proposals for demonstration projects identified needs for client enrollment assistance that were specific to the clientele they hoped to reach. The characteristics of these populations, all of whom are more heterogeneous than the labels indicate, are listed below with a discussion of the barriers that the demonstrations identified and attempted to overcome. The methodologies they used to overcome barriers are discussed in Section V.

1. People Living in Rural Areas

The potentially-eligible food stamp applicants living in rural areas include low-income home owners, itinerant workers, unemployed and possibly homeless persons, and migrants. They are chronically plagued with problems of transportation and physical access to offices where they could receive benefits. Low-income people living on farms or in sparsely populated areas usually have no access to public transportation and often have inadequate private transportation. Those working as farm laborers also often have little flexibility in determining their own schedules.

Although the FSP has developed special provisions to deal with persons living in rural areas, not all food stamp offices assist potential applicants to make use of these provisions. The

perceptions of potential benefit recipients and many eligibility workers is that it is the applicant's responsibility to overcome problems of transportation, health, or childcare in order to make a food stamp application. However, the difficulties of gathering together and copying important documentation is still time-consuming and sometimes entails a cost. Photocopying machines are not always readily available to people living in rural or isolated areas. Many rural people do not have their own telephones and must arrange with neighbors to make calls and then are limited in the amount of time they can spend doing so. Some of these potential applicants do not know of food stamp eligibility requirements and live in communities in which people may have strong negative opinions about government benefit programs. They often hesitate to inquire about enrollment criteria even when they are in need.

2. Elderly People

Older persons, like the rural populations, often have problems of physical access to the food stamp offices. Although provisions are made in the FSP to accommodate their needs by allowing for telephone applications, this is not always carried out in practice by eligibility workers. Even when distance to the food stamp office is not a problem, many older persons have physical disabilities or difficulties in cognition that are hard to describe to an eligibility worker over the telephone. Older persons are not often aware of government benefits other than Social Security and Medicare. Some distrust programs such as Supplemental Security Income and food stamps that seem more like "welfare" to them. They often state that accepting help is a sign of dependency which they wish to avoid.

3. Homeless Individuals and Families

People living without permanent shelter have specific problems in reaching agencies. Many are cognitively impaired and without social support (Liebow 1995). Some find it difficult or impossible to enter crowded buildings and participate in focused interviews with eligibility

workers. They often find it very taxing to gather documentation for the application process. Homeless people without cognitive impairment have many time constraints. Many must walk long distances during the day to get food and shelter or to get to work sites. Without money for transportation or food, many homeless people find going across the city to apply for food stamps or waiting for appointments very difficult. They often need a place to pick up the food stamps and the use of a telephone to call for information and appointments at the local food stamp agency.

4. Low-income Working Families with Children

Low-income working families with children often do not know about their eligibility for food stamps. Many have not used welfare benefits and believe their participation will subject them to disapproval by their neighbors and community. They are particularly sensitive to the stigmatizing effects of enrolling in the FSP because using food stamps is such a public act. They need both information and reassurance that food stamps can be a temporary assistance program.

5. Non-English-Speaking Minorities

Refugees, as well as persons living in settled ethnic communities, may not speak English fluently or at all, and have variable resource and access problems. Clarification of their rights under the law may be very important. All may need translation services, but for some, literacy in any language may be problematic. For people coming from subsistence farming areas, using and budgeting food stamps can be a very difficult concept and one that may not seem relevant to meeting their needs. Client enrollment assistance then has to include language-specific and broad-based information.

IV. THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The demonstration projects proposed many types of activities to reach hard-to-reach populations with which they had experience.³ They implemented a wide range of techniques to provide client enrollment assistance to the FSP, and collected data that would be useful to delineate barriers experienced by their target populations and the effectiveness of the methodologies they used to overcome these barriers.

A. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

As the projects tested methods to assist hard-to-reach populations, they brought various degrees of experience to the work, previously had different patterns of cooperation within their communities and with the local food stamp offices, and had provided different kinds of client assistance. A varying degree of success can, thus, be found among the demonstrations. The criteria for success of the demonstration projects, however, are the same and can be described as follows:

- The extent to which the projects identify barriers to participation and the need for client enrollment assistance to the FSP experienced by the target population groups; and,
- The extent to which the activities the projects conduct provide useful information about effective forms of client assistance.

The project experience also has provided information about the characteristics of agencies and types of projects that have a better chance of success than others.

1. Project Start-Up

When the first 16 projects were funded in the fall of 1993, their staffs planned, with the cooperation of their local food stamp offices, food stamp training for client enrollment assistance workers. Few of the agencies had worked directly with food stamp eligibility before, and many had to prepare their demonstration staffs to understand the complex regulations. In most instances, the

local food stamp agency provided this training, but in others, someone from the nonprofit organization familiar with the FSP trained client assistance staff.

This initial start-up phase of the projects was limited in many of the projects, but others needed more time to resolve issues of staffing and logistics. A few projects had trouble finding the volunteers they had promised in their proposals; others had difficulty in legalizing the cooperative agreements between the awardees and their selected subgrantees. Project delays in actually getting activities underway often indicated that the leadership was uncertain about what kind of staff they wished to hire, what kind of activities they wanted to pursue, and how they would keep records about their work. FCS and the outside evaluators provided technical assistance to overcome some of these problems.

2. Public/Private Partnership

Most of the 16 nonprofit agencies, while very familiar with their client populations, had not provided FSP enrollment assistance in the past. For these organizations, the ties to the local food stamp office had to be established. Most of the projects developed a "release of information" form that allowed project staff to follow the status of their clients' food stamp applications not by individual name, but in aggregate. This verification of how many clients who had been assisted, applied to the FSP, and were accepted was very important to the evaluation process.

There was no single arrangement required under the first 16 grants between the grantees and the local food stamp agency to define responsibilities. Each project had to work out arrangements for training and data verification with its own local food stamp agency. Several of the food stamp agencies were instrumental in the application process with the nonprofit organization and willing to provide support in the evaluation process. Others had only sent a letter of support and had limited time for further involvement in the demonstration project.

The degree of investment in the demonstration projects may have been influenced by prior experience between the grantee and the food stamp agency. In some instances, the grantee had served as an advocate on hunger commissions with food stamp personnel and had common perspectives, viewing the needs of clients as primary. In other cases, the grantee had been in adversarial encounters, even law suits, with the local food stamp office. They had assisted clients in fair hearings and had been vocal advocates for change in administrative practices. Still other grantees had had little or no experience with food stamps or the local agencies. They were interested in, but not always knowledgeable about, the regulations and constraints of the program.

It was important that the food stamp office and grantees work well together in order for the projects to be cost effective. When this occurred, time spent on an individual case could be reduced at the food stamp agency by well-prepared project staff who could help the applicant understand the process and gather required documentation.

B. EVALUATING THE PROJECTS

An outside evaluator worked with each project to assist project staff in setting up evaluation procedures. They oriented the staff to the evaluation requirements of the demonstration and overcame the reluctance and difficulties many demonstration project staffs had collecting evaluation data for their own projects. Most of the staffs at the grantee agencies were more comfortable providing services to clients than gathering and reporting data on their activities. With technical assistance most project staffs were able to understand the nature of a demonstration and how it differed from their usual procedures of service provision.

1. Purpose of the Evaluation

The evaluation of the demonstration projects provided information about the reasons why some people who need and want food stamps do not apply for or receive them and identified

methods that organizations can use to address these roadblocks to access. In addition, the evaluation clarified issues of public/private partnerships and provided insight into the ways in which segments of the community can work together to meet the needs of groups who often fall outside routine service provision or are harder than others to serve.

2. Methods of the Evaluation

The evaluation was based on close communication between the project staff and the outside evaluator. Early in the first round of funding, members of the evaluation team made site visits to 15 of the 16 projects and developed site-specific methods for reporting data on aggregate numbers of clients assisted by project staff. Later, additional site visits were made to some of the projects and included focus groups with clients of the projects, (not all of whom were food stamp recipients), and eligibility workers at local food stamp offices. These discussions provided direct information on the problems both potentially-eligible people have in accessing the FSP and problems the eligibility workers encounter in working with people who are applying. In addition, the site evaluators discussed in monthly telephone interviews with project managers the project staff's observations and reports of what factors appeared to influence food stamp participation or nonparticipation among their clients and what activities were being instituted to overcome barriers to access to the FSP. The outside evaluators provided technical assistance to the project staffs so

The monthly evaluation telephone conference between the site and the site evaluator explored much of the context in which the project took place. Project directors reported important events in the community that could influence the intended outcomes of the projects. (intervening variables) such as layoffs and plant closings, natural disasters, and crop successes and failures. Through the assessment of the continuing process and results of the client assistance demonstration, the evaluators and the project staff were able to reflect on the interactions between the people seeking food stamp assistance and the kinds of help that were both effective and efficient. Projects sometimes improved their strategies of providing client assistance during the course of the demonstration by, for example, moving the location of the activities, improving communication with the local food stamp office, or strengthening staff capabilities through additional training.

C. STATUS OF THE EVALUATION

The formative evaluation proceeded as planned. Descriptive data on clients' experiences in relation to the FSP were gathered from all of the sites. The first 16 demonstrations produced numerical data (Table 4) and the individual and focus group interviews and observations on site added to the understanding of individual projects, the problems various populations have with food stamp participation, and the appropriate methods to overcome these problems.

Table 4.
Total Clients Reached by Each Demonstration Project
and Subsequent Outcome

NUMBER OF PERSONS		CONTACTED ABOUT FSP	REFERRED TO FSP	APPLIED TO FSP*	ACCEPTED INTO FSP
SITE NO.	GRANT AMOUNT				
1 Phoenix, AZ	\$ 98,000.	*	*	*	*
2 Los Angeles, CA	200,000.	5,275	730	417	232
3 Denver, CO	99,937.	2,326	1,636	*	1,068
4 District of Columbia (1)	72,658.	2,521	926	558	450
5 Honolulu, HI	48,892.	1,681	509	509	430
6 Boston, MA	200,000.	1,788	718	505	232
7 Greenville, MS	150,000.	4,861	2,404	*	882
8 Bloomfield, NY	199,962.	4,015	942	365	171
9 New York City	80,604.	3,750	2,781	2,256	1,824
10 Syracuse, NY	46,310.	364	180	165	*
11 Morristown, TN	99,938.	1,807	1,072	*	217
12 Jackson, TN	50,000.	323	198	*	155
13 Richmond, VA	69,524.	8,769	614	512	452
14 Barre, VT	44,986.	*	*	*	*
15 Seattle, WA	157,216.	1,276	916	899	545
16 Independence, WI	147,000.	538	360	*	111

*Data were not consistently collected and verified for evaluation purposes.

V. PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES AND ANALYSIS

Not all of the first 16 funded demonstration projects have finished collecting data for the evaluation, but preliminary data are available that allow general observations about outreach, client assistance, and public/private partnerships. As indicated in previous sections of this report, barriers, are known to be associated with the specific population groups for whom client assistance was provided by the demonstration projects. In this section, preliminary findings about these barriers, as they were experienced by clients of the demonstration projects, are clarified, and the methods client-assistance workers used to overcome these barriers are described.

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. Informational Outreach

Traditionally, “outreach” has meant primarily the dissemination of information about the FSP rather than active and targeted client enrollment assistance. All of the projects performed this basic informational task well. However, the need for clients to be informed about the FSP appeared to be less now than earlier studies would indicate. In several instances, project staff found that the people they contacted not only knew about food stamps, but were already enrolled. This may be explained by the large increase in enrollment in the years between the original planning for these demonstration projects and the current time (Trippe 1995). Focus group participants, both clients and eligibility workers, expressed the belief that people generally are aware of the food stamp benefit.

Information about specific eligibility requirements in the FSP appears less widely disseminated, however. Many clients and potential clients reported that they questioned their own

possible eligibility and were unsure of how to enroll. Others chose not to enroll because of their perceptions and experience. These clients found that:

- The benefit was too small;
- The hassle was too great and the application process unpleasant;
- They had other means of getting by; or,
- Their community reinforced the norm of self-reliance rather than the use of public assistance.

2. Public/Private Partnerships

As already noted, a few of the nonprofit organizations that had a great deal of experience as advocates for their clients had a model arrangement with their local food stamp agency. In two of these large organizations, the grantee had served a double role as litigious adversary and a contributor to policy forums within the food stamp office itself. In these interactions, both the nonprofit organization and the local food stamp agency tried to solve client problems before other action was taken, and both sought to negotiate between client needs and agency constraints. With this history, it was not difficult to develop a good working relationship throughout the project, one in which the grantee staff could call upon the food stamp agency staff to answer questions about eligibility issues and ask advice on the problems of particular clients. However, this model relationship occurred in only two of the 16 projects in the first funding cycle.

Most of the local food stamp agencies tried to be helpful to the projects within their own time constraints. Some project directors called the local food stamp office occasionally to find out the procedures they needed to use, to follow up on clients, or to check on outcomes of client applications. However, there were other projects in which the grantee and the local food stamp agency were reluctant to cooperate or simply had no meaningful contact during the course of the project.

Eligibility workers in the local food stamp offices received the applications from project client-assistance workers or their clients. In most cases, this process was straightforward and handled well. Eligibility workers repeatedly mentioned two problems about the demonstrations in focus group interviews, however. First, some believed that the client-assistance workers were too ambitious and too anxious to bring clients into the program. Eligibility workers believed this resulted in:

- Incorrect information given to clients, raising their expectations and hopes which eligibility workers often had to dash;
- Additional work for them in assessing cases that could not be enrolled; and,
- A slow-down of necessary work with "legitimate" cases.

A second problem may have been the cause of the critical assessment some of the eligibility workers gave the project client-assistance workers. Several eligibility workers mentioned after the focus groups had officially ended, that they felt their own jobs were "too expensive for the system" and that they might be replaced with "volunteers". Several interviews with food stamp agency employees indicated that they felt that contracting with organizations to provide client assistance was an indirect criticism of their ability to provide clients with the help they needed.

B. IDENTIFICATION OF ACCESS PROBLEMS

Interviews with the project staff soon after the projects began pointed out barriers that client-assistance workers were observing among their clients as they attempted to access the FSP. Over the course of the projects these deterrents to application to and participation in the FSP began to form meaningful patterns. It became clear that there is a distinction between the absolute barriers that people met, such as lack of transportation to the food stamp office or a conflict between hours of work and hours of operation, and the more subtle (and prevalent) deterrents, such

as stigma and feelings of inferiority. Individual reports and observations became cumulative, and categories emerged from seemingly disparate itemizations of ways in which clients described their reluctance to enroll and participate.

It is not possible to create a hierarchy of barriers and disincentives in terms of those most serious and those least serious. For certain clients, one barrier is a decisive reason why he or she cannot or chooses not to be involved with the program, while for another it is insignificant. Perhaps in most cases, it is a combination of deterrents and barriers that leads an individual to decide not to participate in the FSP. This combination of deterrents and barriers is most likely balanced with the degree of need that an individual feels for the assistance.

1. Client Isolation

There are many ways in which clients can be isolated in their daily lives, and, as a result, find it too difficult to reach out to social programs that could be of significant value to them. Many of these deterrents build upon one another, compounding the hardships of obtaining entitlements.

a. Poor Literacy and Math Skills

Limited literacy and English language skills are two inter-related, but not identical, areas, in which clients encounter deterrents to entering the FSP. These descriptors are often used by project staff and also in some client and eligibility worker focus groups as reasons why some people do not participate in the FSP. These problems were discussed in relation to immigrants, refugees, some rural and urban low-income clients, and homeless people.

Literacy problems may abort the application before it is begun either because such help is not available or the psychological cost of asking for it and admitting to being illiterate is too great. Not being able to read, at least not at the level required for application to the FSP, implies a need for someone to be available to help throughout the process. Not only must the client have help to complete the application, but often must have someone read the telephone book to find the

telephone number and address, find the street in which the office is located, and understand the directions for making an application, such as which lines to stand in for information and other instructions.

The embarrassment of admitting to a problem in literacy may keep the client from returning with documentation, thereby aborting the application process after it has begun. Even if all the initial barriers are overcome, the illiterate client must be able to understand and remember the directions given by the eligibility worker, including all the separate pieces of documentation that are required, the time of the next appointment, and the further steps in the application process. These are items that might be noted on paper by a literate person to be used as a reminder at a future time; the illiterate person is unable to do this. Furthermore, the person with low literacy skills may have developed coping strategies for managing this disability, including hiding it to avoid being stigmatized, and may not indicate that there is a problem in retaining information. When a literacy problem is disclosed, the eligibility worker could help by making notes for the client to take along for others to read.

Limited math skills work to inhibit the application process in much the same way. The potentially-eligible client may fear the calculations that are required in the application process and the responsibility that he or she must assume in handling food stamp coupons and understanding their use. Knowing that there are sanctions for the misuse of the benefit, many people who can neither read or calculate will prefer to avoid the difficulties the application entails for them.

b. Language Barriers

Language barriers have the same effect of curtailing the application before it is begun or in the middle of the process for the same reasons as noted above. Some people are not able to access necessary information, to find the telephone number, the street, or fill out the forms. Non- or limited-English-speaking people may be assisted through translation. There are clients, however,

who are then faced with literacy problems, for they are not readers or writers of their oral language. Providing translation services is not always sufficient for these clients.

When translation services are available within the food stamp office, they are often found to be neither complete nor sufficient. For instance, a completed application form printed in another language may then be evaluated by someone who does not speak that language. Or waiting for help from the eligibility worker with appropriate language skills may present the client with another barrier, that of cost of services rendered, which will be discussed in another section.

For some clients, the language barrier is particularly acute during verbal interactions in the food stamp office. Such a client may not understand when her name is called, because the pronunciation is not what she recognizes. Such a client may miss a turn for service, and when a staff person asks why she is not being helped, she may be embarrassed and humiliated to find she is judged incompetent in hearing as well as speaking. Finally, in working with an English speaking eligibility worker, those with limited English proficiency may find themselves and their concerns poorly understood, thus creating yet another source of discomfort and embarrassment.

c. Geographic Isolation and Mail Delivery Problems

Where a client lives affects the potential for using services. Project staff reported that many people living in great geographic isolation find that transportation costs outweigh the value of receiving a benefit. There may simply be no transportation, or costs of paying for it may be high. In these demonstration projects' experience, very few food stamp offices implemented the option of allowing potential applicants to apply by telephone. Even when this was the case, in most cases clients needed to travel to collect documentation and copy it. For some people, knowledge of the FSP may not have reached them, including information about their potential eligibility or the possibility of mail issuance of benefits, but more often the costs of paying for transportation by taxi or from a neighbor are higher than the benefit justifies. This is particularly true when one must

make repeated trips to the agency to apply for and collect the stamps, or when one is elderly and may be frail.

Mail delivery is still problematic for a large number of people in both rural and urban areas. For Native Americans living on reservations, mail sometimes is distributed through centrally located facilities that may be more than an hour away from the client's home. One project reported that people may go to the mail box only once a month or less. In such cases, food stamps often were returned to the administrative offices before they could be collected by the client, paper work was delayed, and enrollments dropped. For others living in cities, apartment houses filled with low-income, sometimes transient, residents receive poor mail service. Some apartments are filled with refugees with similar or the same last names. Mail is misdelivered or left to be sorted by the residents themselves. Food stamps then become a commodity that can be stolen, misdirected, or misused. The client may have trouble claiming the loss of stamps because he or she cannot pinpoint the nature of the theft or misappropriation. People living on the streets, who are offered mail services through city-contracted firms, sometimes find that these firms lack the motivation to provide adequate service. In several sites clients reported waiting many days for benefits that should have been delivered earlier.

Homeless individuals are not frequently viewed as being isolated, but they are in many respects. They have little access to information through the mails and cannot communicate with appropriate offices in an ordinary way. Without friends or family from whom they can ask for cooking privileges, most of these people find storing and cooking food difficult or impossible. Many find that using food stamps requires extraordinary logistical arrangements.

It is interesting to note, however, that for many homeless individuals, signing up for and using food stamps is a mark of increasing stability and independence. Clients remarked that they could shop for food like other people and were no longer dependent on reaching meal sites for their

nutritional needs. This often freed them to look for work or to take day-labor. Without food stamps, the homeless individuals often spend much of their day moving from one opportunity to receive free food to another. Energy must be expended on the immediate needs rather than being able to make any rational plan to maximize resources.

2. Costs to Clients

There are various kinds of costs that a client can experience in gaining access to the FSP. Literally, there are expenses that are incurred in getting to and from the office in terms of gasoline, bus, or taxi fare, and/or baby-sitting costs. People with low incomes often have to pay a neighbor to take them to appointments, and as the number of appointments necessary to become enrolled in the FSP increase, the costs of that enrollment also increase.

The FSP allows a standard deduction for vehicles owned by the clients which many clients and project staff believe is too low for some people with special needs. For instance, families with many children may feel they need a large vehicle to transport them, and such a vehicle is more expensive than a smaller car. Eligibility workers may make exceptions to the standard vehicle regulations if it is a resource for finding or reaching employment. Exceptions of this kind were rarely reported in the case of clients from the demonstration projects, however. When more than one member of the family is employed, the vehicle exemption was seen to be a deciding deterrent to enrollment in the FSP.

a. Loss of Self-Esteem

For many clients, giving up the status of independence and publicly acknowledging poverty or need by using food stamps in a local store is too high a price to pay for the help received. Cashing food stamps at the store is an act visible to one's neighbors and a marker of poverty. The public nature of using food stamps instead of cash to buy food inhibits many from participating. People in about a third of the focus groups mentioned that the community "polices" the food stamp

users and telephones the agency to report those they feel are "cheating the taxpayers." Particularly in rural areas where there is not a large choice of stores in which to shop, people often fear that they maybe seen by their neighbors and expose their poverty and need.

The problem of stigma goes beyond self-perception issues. Wider public perceptions also are involved and affect the client, especially when the validity of public support programs is under attack. Negative attitudes toward "illegal" immigrants spill over to those who are in this country under legal arrangements, for visually and from other identity clues, legal and undocumented aliens are inseparable to the public. Clients in several towns and cities reported that people in the checkout lines in stores, or the clerks themselves, questioned their right to use food stamps, embarrassing them in front of others. Clients reported that any program participant may feel labeled as a "welfare cheat" or "taxpayer burden" when public rhetoric becomes heated.

b. Opportunity Costs

There are also opportunity costs that are incurred when a client must leave another activity for which he or she is receiving money or benefits to make an application or conduct other business at the food stamp office. Low-income workers, as well as men and women working in jobs that are negotiated through a temporary labor supplier, reported that getting food stamps required them to leave their job for a few hours or more, resulting in a loss of cash pay. Day laborers reported that if they miss the assignment for a daily job to sit in the food stamp office, they lose cash. Homeless people reported in focus groups that they lose opportunities for meals and mail-calls in shelters when they wait in the food stamp office for service. For people living with very few resources, these losses may result in the client falling to an even deeper level of poverty.

Many low income people told the interviewers in focus groups that they would like to be employed, but cannot depend on a stable income. They can neither account for the income they

have received nor anticipate their next wages. Day laborers are often paid in cash without receipts. They fear that they will cause trouble with employers if they ask for documentation of their pay.

In three focus groups, participants reported that low-wage employment was largely in the hands of temporary employment agencies. Many of these temporary agencies do not provide documentation for each job they assign. Therefore, few of the workers can provide the required documentation to the food stamp office for every job they undertake. When food stamp recipients ask for this documentation, the labor intermediary knows immediately that the worker is on food stamps. Participants in one focus group said that they are then subject to intimidation by the labor intermediary who threatens that if they do not accept the jobs no one else wants, such as cleaning trucks that had carried chemicals or doing other dangerous work, he or she will report them to the food stamp office for being out of compliance with reporting rules.

c. Disclosure Costs

The evaluators began to look at some of the costs of food stamps as a personal one, that of giving up safety, future options, independence, and status. In this report, these are described as problems of "disclosure." Many clients, rightly or wrongly, believe that their safety depends on managing information about one's personal affairs with great care. Project directors frequently reported that immigrants, for example, often believe that accepting public support will later affect their ability to obtain permanent residency status. According to some client-assistance staff, some residents of out-patient or community correctional facilities (half-way houses) believe that they will be more easily traced if something goes wrong in the community. Both ex-offenders and immigrants believe that their chances for being accepted as full-fledged members of American society depend upon their being independent of government benefit programs.

The elderly often feel unsafe going to certain inner city, crowded social service agencies, as well. Some feel they will be subject to harassment or theft when they leave the safety of the building. They sometimes feel that the benefit is too small to make the effort worth these risks.

3. Administrative Deterrents

a. Access to the Food Stamp Office

One of the major disincentives to potential clients may be the hours of the agency's operation. For many groups, a restricted number of hours is difficult to fit around one's schedule. For instance, farm families often have only one vehicle that must take the wage earner to work. Others are left at home without transportation. Farm workers sometimes find it hard to reach FSP offices during the work day. Some offices handle the overflow of clients by restricting the days on which clients are seen or the hours in which they may call. This is confusing for those with limited literacy capabilities.

For those without telephones, often borrowing a neighbor's phone is possible if the call can be completed quickly. Clients reported that they must often call the food stamp office repeatedly in order to get an open line, and under these circumstances, the privilege may be rescinded. Many people cannot get to a telephone booth in a public place to make a call, and some clients have reported waiting hours in order to reach their eligibility worker or to get information that is needed for the application. Homeless respondents have told the evaluators that some eligibility workers will not come to the telephone to speak to them, and they have no possibility of leaving a return telephone number; this severely limits their access to the food stamp agency.

Homeless clients reported that available jobs were far from shelter, and those people living on the streets felt unprepared to go into job training classes without a chance to wash, eat, and sleep like others in preparation for a learning experience. In other words, they felt job training should be

in residential settings that would allow homeless people a release from the daily struggle for survival while learning new skills. For many people who are on the street, their self-esteem is so low that the possibility of being exposed to another situation in which they will be shown to be inadequate is too difficult without extra social support.

b. Appointment Systems and Waiting for Service

Many agencies have an appointment system to help them regulate the flow of clients. Such a system may work well under some circumstances, but without some flexibility built into it, may effectively exclude those who cannot manage this kind of structured time allotment. Many people are in need of assistance because of mental and physical health problems that result in an inability to manage their lives efficiently. For them, an appointment system may be an insurmountable barrier. Not only are the homeless, mentally ill in this category, but elderly people with confusion and physical handicaps are as well. One agency visited by the evaluation staff displayed a sign that read, "Five minutes late for your appointment and you reschedule." However, the people in the waiting room were waiting more than an hour to see their workers. This sets up an inequality in the participant-worker relationship that encourages authoritarian modes of conduct, which is another disincentive to clients. Focus group participants were outspoken in their distaste for this situation.

c. Administrative Caps

In several of the agencies the evaluation staff visited, limits on the numbers of new clients who could enroll within a certain period had been informally established. Staff at grantee agencies, and even one food stamp office supervisor, explained that these restrictions were in force. Restricting the hours and days of operation, as well as the number of client assistance sites, is another way of capping enrollment. Reducing the number of sites, thereby requiring clients to travel farther for services, has the same effect.

d. Agency Ambiance

In a few of the food stamp issuance locations visited by the researchers, clients were exposed publicly to humiliating circumstances. In one instance, clients had to wait outdoors until they were called into the office, and then were escorted into the building by a security officer in groups of ten. At another site, the clients had to stand at a bank window, clearly labeled as for food stamp recipients, and wait for their benefits. If a "real customer" came in, the food stamp recipient had to wait until the clerk had served the other person first. These procedures are clearly demeaning to the recipients of services to which they are entitled under law.

The ambiance of the food stamp office is reflected in signs on the wall, the amount of space allocated to clients, and the arrangement of furniture. Very often the offices themselves reflect discouraging attitudes toward clients. A sampling of signs found around the country on individual's desks in food stamp offices included:

- "Your first mistake was to think that I care."
- "If you have come to complain, you have used 97% of your time. Use the other three percent to walk out the door."
- "What part of NO don't you understand?"

These signs, that are in plain view, are obviously not removed by supervisors and, thus, bear at least the implicit approval and endorsement of other employees. They give a message to clients that they can expect negative attitudes on the part of personnel and set up or reinforce an adversarial relationship between clients and staff. This relationship was verified in focus groups with both clients and staff at these particular sites.

Clients reported that the workers themselves are sometimes a barrier to service because they appear to be short-tempered and not ready to help clients with problems. The workers and their supervisors are responsible for accuracy in their decision-making and are held responsible for errors that occur in their work. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that these workers err

on the side of caution and do not use the regulations that would ease access for those with particular difficulties. At other times the eligibility workers appear to interpret regulations in arbitrary ways. Eligibility workers in food stamp offices have demanding and highly stressful jobs. They explained to the evaluators in focus groups that they carry caseloads of hundreds of people, and see many each week who beg, demand, and plead for assistance that they may or may not be able to give. They feel that the nature of the work often causes high turnover among their FSP staff. At the same time, the regulations of the program are very lengthy and change frequently.

Project directors reported a wide range of behaviors among eligibility workers in some of the food stamp offices that served to discourage potential clients from applying for benefits. One project director reported that an eligibility worker tore up an application because the client had not written legibly, humiliating that potential food stamp recipient and discouraging him from making any further effort to file an application. Not only that, but this potential client told others that applying for food stamps is not worth the effort, thereby discouraging them from applying. At another site, a teen was turned away because he was not yet eighteen, even though he was homeless and in need of food stamps. He did not return, even when informed by a client-assistance worker that the food stamp office might be in error, and that he might be judged an emancipated minor and eligible for food stamps.

Certain food stamp regulations are deterrents in themselves. The requirement that recipients seek employment can be a serious deterrent for people with no diagnosed illness, but actual functional disabilities. Even for mentally and physically competent people, available manual labor is scarce and choices are not frequent, particularly in areas where there are few employers. Problems of day laborers, as noted, make participation in the FSP very difficult.

The data from this study indicate that barriers to the FSP are not isolated incidents, but rather in some cases are deep situational barriers, and in other cases, are interrelated systems of

administrative barriers and other deterrents. Many of these barriers and deterrents have been addressed by the demonstration projects, and will be assessed further in the final evaluation report on the projects.

C. EFFECTIVENESS OF CLIENT ASSISTANCE METHODS

Often, small changes in access can make the difference to an individual and affect the numbers of enrollees in a service area. Public assistance centers with variable hours of operation, eligibility workers who understand the needs and circumstances of clients, and office atmospheres that reflect respect for clients are rewarding in themselves and may lead to more representative participation among those eligible for food stamps.

Some qualities of the projects themselves have seemed to predict success. In every case, the ability and motivation of the project director and staff were very important. The following

The atmosphere of the food stamp office itself is beyond the control of the demonstration projects, but often contributes to project results. Positive reinforcement for behavior that assists the food stamp office in conducting business is found in some offices and assists the enrollment process by keeping applicants in a cooperative frame of mind. Attractive signs bearing motivational messages were seen in one office, and in the waiting room a video player showed "advertisements" made by nonprofit organizations in the community explaining how they could help people with a variety of needs.

Another contrast between two projects illustrates the differences in motivation and intensity of client assistance, although both project staffs were contacting migrant families through door-to-door approaches. In one project, client-assistance workers already employed by the school system were hired by the food stamp demonstration project to include food stamp client assistance in their informational format. Two of these workers talked very briefly with the wives of farm workers at their doorways or in their living rooms about their children and said in passing, "Would you like to know about food stamps?" Most of the women said "no," and there was no follow-up. In the second project, the client-assistance worker went to migrant camps and asked the owners if their workers could use the copying machines to prepare their application materials, to which the owners agreed. *She then went to the migrants' lodgings and spoke to each family or individual* telling them what was needed and how to copy the necessary documents. She made the process easily understandable, did not require the client to read materials, and brought hundreds of people into the program.

This example shows that the same kind of client-assistance activity can have very different results depending on the skill of the client-assistance worker in analyzing the components of the needed assistance, his or her planning of the various steps that will accomplish successful client assistance, and the understanding he or she has of clients' needs and attitudes. The content of the

activity appears on the surface to be the same in these two examples, but the manner of implementation of the door-to-door approach is clearly critical to its success.

One type of project seemed to ensure that large numbers of enrollees would enter the FSP. That method is what the evaluation staff came to call "working from a list." Using a list of clients receiving a benefit other than food stamps, client-assistance workers contacted them and provided pre application assistance to those who were eligible and in need. If the benefit programs have similar criteria for enrollment, the success of the project is almost assured. However, this mode of operation tells us little about interpersonal or interactive client assistance or about barriers that clients have encountered.

Two patterns that ensured a high rate of enrollees were seen in projects in which either the client-assistance worker (1) hand-delivered the application to the food stamp office for the client or (2) assisted the client to prepare to meet with the food stamp eligibility worker at the nonprofit agency. In the first instance, the project staff person interviewed the clients in their own surroundings and then took the application back to the food stamp office and made an appointment for the client to come in for an interview. This saved the client one trip to the local food stamp office and assured him or her that an appointment had been made. Only a few projects received a waiver from the regulations to do this, but in those cases there was a better rate of follow-up by clients.

In the second instance, "outstationed" eligibility workers from the local food stamp office were assigned to the community agency where they could meet clients. The project staff helped the clients prepare their applications by reading them aloud and explaining what was needed for verification. The eligibility worker from the local food stamp office then took the applications back to the office and determined eligibility. Again, an "outstationed" eligibility worker could only be assigned in this way with a waiver of certain FSP regulations. (These waiver requests were made

through the cooperation of State agencies with nonprofit organizations, in which State agencies donated staff time to meet with nonprofit staff to prepare the materials needed for waiver requests.) In both instances, the client was not given an opportunity to drop out of the process at the point of application. The client began the process without making a critical decision to go to the food stamp office him or herself. In most instances, a later appointment at the food stamp office was necessary, but by that time the application was already near completion and the client had a good chance of success. For clients who were experiencing a great deal of failure in other aspects of their lives, this intervention circumvented another round of failure and possible embarrassment.

Helping eligibility workers to work with populations who do not respond with willing cooperation to the requirements of the FSP is important if barriers are to be overcome. One of the projects trained eligibility workers about the lives of homeless individuals and the problems they face. This training had a rather remarkable effect on many and changed the appearance of several food stamp offices for the better, providing more privacy for clients and a more cheerful atmosphere. In other locations, the eligibility workers appeared to have little information about their clients' lives and expressed fear and distrust of many of them.

Eligibility workers generally expressed pride in their work and its effect on hunger. However, many said that hunger was exaggerated, and that many or most recipients did not deserve to be on the program. In two sites, the eligibility workers expressed extreme frustration in dealing with people they felt were unwilling to work, selling their food stamps for drugs, and demanding service in a threatening way. It was interesting to note that in communities where food stamp workers expressed the most negative attitudes toward clients, the clients returned the hostility in kind.

D. REACHING TARGET POPULATIONS

It is clear from the data that clients believe that the FSP is highly significant in reducing hunger when the benefits are high enough. Many clients felt that without food stamps they would not survive. Most clients and all eligibility workers complained that the elderly receive so little in benefits that the program makes no difference in their nutrition. If medical expenses are taken into account for those elderly persons who are ill, the benefits rise, but the perception remains that this is the single target group for which food stamps are not a major factor in the well-being of needy people.

No client believed that food stamps could provide all of the food they would need in a month. Most supplemented their stamps with commodities, communal meals, or gardens and other self-reliant means of producing or obtaining food. The homeless often "panhandle". Clients reported a great deal of sharing among people in all of the target groups. Families help each other out, the homeless bring food back from feeding sites to give to those who are disabled and cannot get there themselves, communities provide food in feeding sites, food banks, and through mobile vans.

In many instances, people in focus groups reported that food stamps, designed to be used only for food, were traded for the chance to share housing with someone, for the opportunity to heat food, or to make a down payment on a used car or apartment. It was clear from many of the interviews that some clients consider food stamps a currency. While all of these uses of food stamps are illegal, most are not illogical.

1. Rural Clients

Projects addressing the needs of rural clients for preapplication assistance used media campaigns, 1-800 numbers to provide information and preapplication assistance, volunteer and paid client-assistance workers, provided some transportation, conducted community presentations,

offered pre-application assistance, and provided authorized representatives for a few clients. In several sites staff went door-to-door explaining the FSP and inquiring about the need for assistance among potentially-eligible people. In general, the rural sites did not show large numbers of clients entering the FSP through these client-assistance efforts. The sites that were the most successful could trace their positive outcomes to energetic and innovative client-assistance workers.

a. Media Campaigns

Project staffs used radio and television announcements to reach rural populations. These took the form of public service announcements and were informational in nature. Some programs attempted to raise awareness of the FSP in the targeted communities, dispel myths, and counter negative attitudes toward accepting government assistance. To the extent that the responses could be tracked, this method generated a few potential clients but appeared less effective than other types of media outreach, such as advertisements that projects placed in local community newspapers and shoppers' guides.

b. Toll-Free Telephone Number

Projects often conducted media campaigns in conjunction with a toll-free telephone number. The number appeared on all written materials in radio and television announcements. Clients could then call the project for assistance, and project staff could provide information on the food stamp application process and FSP requirements. This service allowed people who were concerned about their privacy and wished to have confidentiality an opportunity to find out the requirements for enrollment and assess whether they fell within eligibility guidelines. This initial step occurred without potential clients risking embarrassment or having to call or visit the food stamp office in person. This service was especially practical in view of rural programs that covered large service areas with a minimum number of client-assistance staff. The availability of 1-800 numbers generally drew effective results in terms of the number of calls that were received.

c. Door-to-Door

It seemed logical to several rural projects to send paid staff or volunteers door-to-door to reach isolated people who might need food assistance. Three projects attempted this technique, two using volunteers and the other paid staff. The programs using volunteers did not reach significant numbers of people who wanted to apply for food stamps. The volunteers hesitated to do the canvassing they had agreed to undertake. When the time came to actually approach their neighbors, they found they could not do it. The projects appeared to have no backup plans when their initial approach was not successful. Projects that used paid staff to go door to door appeared to be more effective in the number of contacts they made.

d. Transportation

Few of the projects actually provided transportation to clients. Insurance risks were too large for many client-assistance workers and projects. Only in situations where no other solution could be found did client-assistance workers transport clients to the food stamp office. Transportation remains a problem for rural people who would like to use the FSP and who are not informed of the special considerations available to them in the regulations. Regulations permit a case-by-case decision to use telephone interviews or home visits for the purpose of conducting application interviews.

e. Authorized Representatives

Few of the projects used authorized representatives, (persons who are authorized to pick up the food stamps for the client). Many factors mitigated against this technique. First, it was difficult to provide service to these clients while doing other client assistance. Second, neither the clients nor the client-assistance workers were completely comfortable with the responsibility it entailed. For those cases where it was done, however, it was very successful.

2. Elderly Clients

Virtually all of the sites served some elderly clients, but several specifically targeted these populations. One site had intended to reach elderly people, but found that the benefit was too low to attract significant numbers of food stamp applicants. They then directed their assistance to clients who were low-income people with jobs. Another project found that the elderly resisted asking for government assistance. Some of these potential clients spoke negatively about food stamps at presentations the project initiated at senior meal sites.

Methods that appear to be useful in helping older and disabled persons to gain access to the FSP are distributing information in settings where older people gather and providing assistance in understanding what documentation is needed for the program and how to gather it together. In addition, project staff provided useful services to elderly clients by conducting home visits and assisting them to identify and photocopy documentation necessary for the food stamp application. Some demonstration staff assisted older people in senior centers and in senior housing, taking their services to people who might be frail or disabled.

a. Door-to-Door

In some areas, door-to-door campaigns were quite successful with the elderly. If the client-assistance workers are known in the community and approach the elderly client with self-assurance and politeness, it is possible to help that client with the application procedures.

b. Community Presentations

Church meetings, senior centers, and lunch sites were among the places client-assistance workers met these elderly clients. The presentations themselves stressed the fact that food stamps are a program of the Department of Agriculture. This helped to separate the message from "welfare," which is often unacceptable to this age group. In general these messages presented at

community meetings were more enthusiastically received when followed by one-on-one client enrollment assistance.

c. Special Arrangements for the Elderly

In one town, the demonstration staff and the local Department of Public Welfare worked together to enhance the opportunities for older persons to apply for food stamps through the mail. The outreach staff of the nonprofit organization provided information to the potential applicants and gave them the name of the food stamp worker assigned to handle application from older persons. Together they worked to make the application process easy to understand and to accomplish.

d. Targeted Media Presentations

One project developed public service announcements and a video that explained the FSP and its relevance to older persons. These presentations were aired at times when older persons would be likely to watch TV or to listen to the radio. They appeared to be well received.

3. Homeless Clients

Homeless people were not often bothered by stigma in using food stamps. On the contrary, they reported in focus group interviews that using food stamps made them feel "like other Americans who shop for their own food." Many also spoke of the need to budget their resources and the role of food stamps in learning how to do that. For instance, they learned to parcel out their stamps as they did other resources, and this process led to planning ahead. Many saw food stamps as a resource that will lead them out of homelessness. With food stamps, the homeless person has a little more freedom to take a job instead of waiting for a meal at a shelter and has a tangible resource to factor into planning for the future. Receiving food stamps was an empowering experience.

Homeless clients were unanimous in their endorsement of the FSP. Many clients said that they can find food on the street, but not in the variety they would like, not at the times when they are necessarily hungry, and not in the quantity that actually stills their hunger. The option of food stamps is very important because they provide a choice of nutritious and fresh foods and the opportunity to get food when one is really hungry. There are problems storing food that often have to be overcome, however.

In every focus group with clients, the issue of choice was raised. This seemed to imply more than just choosing foods, although that was very important. For many homeless people who depend on congregate meals for most of their nourishment, having a choice of food, as well as the time and place to eat it, brought self-esteem and a feeling of empowerment. Several clients mentioned the importance of being able to buy foods rich in protein, the choice to provide something extra for their children or themselves.

a. “Door-to-Door”

This kind of client assistance was used in urban projects in which the worker went from one shelter and feeding site to another finding homeless people to talk to about the FSP. As previously described, this technique worked very well when the client-assistance worker moved about from individual to individual and less well when he or she made a general announcement about the availability of information about the FSP and waited for clients to approach for information.

b. Client Assistance within the Agency

In one project, the food stamp agency sent a worker into the shelter to take applications. The client-assistance workers at the shelter prescreened clients and helped them to fill out the applications. The eligibility worker then took the applications directly to the food stamp agency. This worked exceedingly well.

c. Consultation and Referral for Benefit Appeals

None of the projects actually carried out formal appeals for their clients, but many helped the clients through difficult situations at the food stamp agency. Many eligibility workers do not know the rules regarding homeless people,⁴ or they exercise their own options to either refuse service or make clients very uncomfortable. Project staff often raised these issues with the administrations of various agencies and were true advocates for the clients.

d. In-service Training

One project provided in-service training to food stamp workers to help them understand the situation in which homeless people find themselves. They did this training throughout the state and had very positive feed-back from eligibility workers.

3. Low-Income Working Families with Children

Many families are not prepared for the job market they find today. Temporary or low-paying jobs are often the only employment they can find as more and more manual jobs become automated, and routines once done by hand are done by devices (Rifkin 1995). Some people find that accepting food stamps as a solution to their needs is demoralizing because of attitudes in the community and broadcasts through the media about "taxpayer burdens".

Only a few of the sites targeted low income, working families with children as their main focus, but such families appeared in most of the projects as parts of other populations, such as the homeless or rural clients. Several methods appeared to be helpful in assuring them access into the FSP.

a. Community Presentations

Many working but poor families are now appearing at feeding centers in small towns. They mingle there with those who are homeless. Presentations made by client-assistance workers give them the opportunity to ask about regulations and the possibility that they might be eligible to

participate. Some programs found that clients were intimidated by speaking in a public meeting and would wait to contact the staff at a later date using the toll-free number.

b. Toll-free Numbers and Media Campaigns

These techniques preserve the privacy of individuals as they seek information about the FSP. This first step in applying is often the most difficult. A skilled client-assistance worker can make the caller feel more comfortable by recognizing the fact that the caller is concerned for the health and well-being of the family and is providing for them. Encouragement is an important bridge to the application process. Successful video and public service announcements targeted to the working poor can reduce the stigma of accepting assistance on a short-term basis. The message that people may need help temporarily allows the applicant to food stamps to feel that he or she is providing for legitimate needs and not becoming a chronic recipient of public benefits.

c. Co-location

Bringing nonprofit client assistance workers into public agencies to provide client assistance also helps individuals who are working, but who are newly impoverished. If they bring their children to get Medicaid benefits and find that they can also receive assistance to apply for food stamps, the context of the interaction remains focused on caring for the family. This is an important difference to many people who are inexperienced with poverty and receiving benefits.

d. Client Assistance for Those with Temporary Employment

Those who are employed intermittently find it difficult to provide accurate and timely information regarding their eligibility for food stamps. It is a help to the client and often to the food stamp office to have client-assistance staff from a nonprofit organization in the office to assist these applicants. These cases are often the most time-consuming for the eligibility workers to manage, and help from well-trained nonprofit staff can be valuable.

5. Non- or Limited-English-speaking Minorities

Appropriate assistance must include both translation services and preapplication assistance in order to be effective for this population. Grantees reached people privately in their homes or in centers where they gather in order to explain the FSP and listen to their concerns. Project staff assisted people in finding the necessary documentation and even, occasionally, the location of the food stamp office. For projects working with linguistic minorities, bi-lingual assistance staff with sensitivity for particular customs and concerns within national groups were very helpful.

Problems of language and literacy may be compounded by alien immigration status for this group of clients. Many are afraid that they will not be able to continue their quest for citizenship if they participate in a public assistance program. They sometimes categorically dismiss offers of client-assistance workers to help them enroll for this reason.

Many immigrant or refugee families share food, space, childcare services, automobiles, and other goods and services. The food stamp applications make these arrangements seem questionable and culturally foreign. A well-trained client-assistance worker can sort through such complicated arrangements and preserve the interest of the client in pursuing the application.

a. Translation Services

Several of the sites provided translators who did a number of tasks, including the translation and distribution of FSP materials. They also accompanied clients to appointments in order to translate verbal interactions and answered questions that the clients had about the process.

b. Door-to-Door/Person-to-Person

In several projects client-assistance workers visited apartment houses known to be occupied by immigrants and refugees and spoke to the residents in their own language. Client-assistance workers also went to clinics serving immigrant populations and sat in the waiting rooms with patients. The most effective workers moved from person to person explaining the FSP. This

was an effective technique, but did not result in large numbers of enrollees because of the legalities the clients faced.

c. Media Campaigns

One project produced a video about the FSP for an Hispanic cable channel and believed from the response that it was very successful. As with all media campaigns that are not connected to a response line, however, no true measure of impact can be determined without engaging in more sophisticated methods than were available to the projects.

d. Native-American Language Assistance

One project developed a hot-line to assist Native Americans living in isolated areas to learn about and apply for food stamps. Telephone operators assisted callers in Hopi and Navajo languages. The Department of Social Services maintained nine offices on the reservations to accept food stamp applications, and callers could be directed to these offices for extra assistance on assigned days of the month.

E. SUMMARY

The first sixteen projects conducted client assistance directed to all the target groups and demonstrated all of the outreach and client assistance techniques identified in the authorizing legislation. Narrative accounts given by the project directors and observation of the projects directly by the evaluators provided extensive qualitative data for the formative evaluation. Quantitative data regarding numbers of clients reached by each demonstration project and those referred to the food stamp agency are complete for each project that did direct client outreach. Verification of applications and enrollments of these clients was not always satisfactorily performed in the first cycle of funding because of the nature of the local arrangements with the

local food stamp agencies; this is corrected in the second cycle of demonstration projects, still underway.

Barriers to food stamp enrollment and participation were identified through direct client interviewing and observation of the enrollment process. The location of the barrier, whether in the clients' perceptions and experiences or in the food stamp agency, is better understood through the work of the demonstration projects. Appropriate methods of overcoming barriers through methods of client assistance targeted to specific population groups are becoming increasingly apparent as the demonstrations come to an end and are evaluated.

¹Today the FSP serves 26 million people a month at an annual cost of \$27 billion dollars. The program is authorized by Congress, but is administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Consumer Service (USDA, FCS). The program reaches its clients through State welfare agencies and their local offices. The benefits can only be used for food. The FSP is an entitlement program whose beneficiaries are not categorically defined. Rather, eligibility for the FSP is based on income and asset levels as set by Congress, and the food stamp benefit includes working families with low incomes, individuals with disabilities, people without permanent shelter, people with few assets and low incomes who are elderly, and others. Slightly more than half of the beneficiaries are children below the age of 18.

²For a more comprehensive review of this literature, see Gretchen Schafft and William Millsap. "Nonparticipation and Problems of Access in the Food Stamp Program: A review of the Literature." U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Service, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, February 1996.

³Some activities that demonstration projects might have liked to undertake to increase participation among certain groups are not allowed under USDA grant guidelines. State that receive Federal 50-50 matching funds to conduct outreach activities, cannot receive Federal matching funds to provide transportation services to applicants who need to visit certification and/or issuance offices.

⁴Clients and eligibility workers told evaluators that individuals sometimes are judged to be eligible or not for the FSP on the basis of appearance. If a client is too well-dressed or too unkempt a worker may decide the program isn't for him or her. Outreach workers from advocacy groups intervened when they discovered such a case.

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APPENDIX

FOOD STAMP CLIENT ENROLLMENT ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT SUMMARIES

1. COMPLETED PROJECTS

**1. ARIZONA COMMUNITY ACTION ASSOCIATION, INC.
PHOENIX, ARIZONA**

NAVAHO-HOPI FOOD STAMP OUTREACH PROJECT

Target Group(s):

- Native Americans (Navaho and Hopi)

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Geographic isolation
- Language
- Literacy

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Language-specific materials developed in conjunction with the State FSP agency
- 1-800 number
- Expanded outreach sites

Project Overview:

The Arizona Community Action Association, Inc. (ACAA), a regional nonprofit community action agency that serves Arizona residents, incorporates 29 local community action agencies. The role of ACAA is to serve as a catalyst in assisting communities and groups to identify local poverty problems and devise solutions to meet them.

ACAA has developed food stamp outreach activities targeted to English and Spanish speakers in the past, including a video production about food stamps. Less has been done to reach Native Americans. The food stamp demonstration project built on ACAA's previous experience and expanded it to a different target group; Native Americans living on reservations in rural Arizona.

The demonstration project attempted to reach Navaho and Hopi individuals through the development and dissemination media messages. A 1-800 number was also instituted so that people on reservations could call toll free and receive information about food stamps. The calls were answered at the Department of Economic Security by employees who could either speak Navajo or Hopi. Approximately a hundred calls a month were received, and food stamp

Phoenix, Arizona -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$98,000.00
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¹ Given the nature of a hotline, there was no way to determine whether any call resulted in applications for food stamps or subsequent enrollments. As a result, cost figures are not relevant.

2. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA INTERFAITH HUNGER COALITION LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

REASSESSING LOS ANGELES: COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO ACCESS FOOD

Target Group(s):

- Low income working families
- Non-English-Speaking Minorities (Russian and Middle Eastern)
- Homeless people
- Elderly people

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Stigma
- Lack of transportation
- Illiteracy/language difficulty
- Legal barriers
- Difficulty dealing with the required paperwork and obtaining proper documentation

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Community meetings
- Public service announcements
- Technical assistance and training
- Development of a coalition of nonprofit agencies to provide client assistance
- Food stamp materials produced in several languages (English, Spanish, Korean, Russian, and Farsi)

Project Overview:

The Interfaith Hunger Coalition (IHC) is a nonprofit organization that coordinates efforts to improve access to food by a variety of "hard to reach" populations within central Los Angeles--the Mission District and West Hollywood. IHC has been in existence for 18 years (since 1975) and focuses on a range of issues that contribute to hunger. The organization is dedicated to working with local, state, and federal levels of government to alleviate and prevent hunger through education, technical assistance, advocacy, and empowerment to emergency service providers.

The primary objectives of the food stamp demonstration project were to promote the greater dissemination of knowledge about the availability of food stamps to qualified recipients, to assist those persons in filling out the necessary forms for eligibility, provide transportation to food stamp offices, and help overcome language barriers and other more subtle forms of stigma found to be associated with applying for food stamps. The grantee formed a coalition of nonprofit agencies to provide client enrollment assistance to particular population groups believed to be underserved by the FSP. This project was, unfortunately, severely disrupted by a major earthquake.

Los Angeles, California -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$200,000.00
5275 contacts	=	\$37.90 per contact;
730 referrals	=	\$273.90 per referral;
417 applications	=	\$479.60 per applicant; and,
232 enrollments	=	\$862.07 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	4.4%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	31.8%

3. COLORADO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS DENVER, COLORADO

A STATEWIDE PROGRAM TO INCREASE THE USE OF FOOD STAMPS

Target Group(s):

- Homeless people
- Migrant workers in rural Colorado

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of transportation
- Illiteracy/language difficulty
- Lack of knowledge about FSP
- Difficulty acquiring the proper documents for eligibility

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Community meetings
- Client assistance at homeless shelters and in migrant camps
- Delivery of food stamp applications to local food stamp offices
- Authorized representatives
- Technical assistance and training
- Food stamp materials development
- Development of a coalition of nonprofit agencies to provide client assistance
- Advocacy for clients at the local food stamp agencies

Project Overview:

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) is a non-profit community agency that has worked in collaboration with government agencies and other private agencies throughout Colorado since 1983 to reduce, prevent, and eliminate homelessness. It has sought to expand private-public partnerships between the Department of Social Services (DSS), local food stamp offices, and other agencies assisting the homeless.

The food stamp demonstration project was managed by CCH in conjunction with other organizations working with the homeless around the State. These participating organizations conducted outreach and assisted the homeless apply for food stamps in their respective geographic areas. CCH took the lead in developing outreach materials, providing training, and coordinating the outreach efforts of each participating organization in terms of data collection and the submission of quarterly reports.

Client-assistance workers visited migrant camps and worked closely with food stamp offices to provide services to this population. In some locations, staff followed individuals and families through the application process, providing specific advocacy services to them.

Denver, Colorado – Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$99,937.00
2326 contacts	=	\$42.97 per contact;
1636 referrals	=	\$61.08 per referral;
0 applications¹	=	\$N/A; and,
1068 enrollments	=	\$93.57 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	45.9%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	65.3%

¹ These data were not collected.

4. D.C. HUNGER ACTION WASHINGTON, D.C.

PROJECT OUTREACH

Target Group(s):

- Homeless people
- Non-English-speaking Hispanics
- Non-English-speaking Vietnamese Americans

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of information about FSP
- Literacy problems
- Language translation problems
- Difficulty understanding documentation requirements
- Fear of jeopardizing immigration status

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Development and distribution of language-specific information on FSP
- Client assistance provided at a variety of sites where homeless people gather, such as lunch sites, feeding van sites, neighborhood clinics
- Assistance by telephone
- Door-to-door contacts in targeted neighborhoods
- Client assistance and follow-up with eligibility and enrollment difficulties with local FSP offices
- Group presentations

Project Overview:

D.C. Hunger Action is an advocacy agency that has developed out of other "hunger lobby" groups. Previously, staff had been involved in a study where they interviewed low-income families in order to ascertain food consumption patterns and the degree to which hunger was present in the homes of school-aged children. The data from this survey regarding nutritional needs were used to determine target areas in the current demonstration project.

The population groups targeted by D.C. Hunger Action in the food stamp demonstration project included the homeless, Asians, and Hispanics in specific city wards. Client-assistance workers were selected and hired, based in part on their ethnicity, to match the populations and language groups of the targeted populations. Workers used a variety of methods to reach these groups, including door-to-door outreach and visits to clinic waiting rooms, homeless shelters, feeding centers, and mobile van sites where the homeless gathered for meals.

Washington, DC -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$72,658.00
2,521 contacts	=	\$28.82 per contact;
926 referrals	=	\$78.46 per referral;
558 applications	=	\$130.21 per applicant; and,
450 enrollments	=	\$161.46 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	17.9%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	48.6%

5. IMMIGRANT CENTER HONOLULU, HAWAII

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH TO HAWAII'S IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Target Group(s):

- Asian and Pacific Island immigrant populations on Oahu (Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Filipino, including both Ilocano and Tagalog speakers) and People from American Samoa

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Language barriers
- Lack of knowledge about the FSP
- Fear of endangering immigration status
- Fear of endangering ability to sponsor others for immigration
- Difficulty in negotiating the social service bureaucracy
- Feelings of shame in being identified by others as needing assistance

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Utilization of a 1-800 number
- Advocacy with local food stamp offices for specific clients
- Door-to-door contacting of potentially-eligible clients
- Assistance by telephone
- The provision of language specific counselors for prescreening and pre-application assistance
- Creation of language-specific informational materials
- The development and dissemination of a language-specific multi-media campaign
- Training other community organizations to pre-screen and refer potentially eligible clients

Project Overview:

The Immigrant Center in Honolulu has served the large, multi-ethnic immigrant community in Honolulu for more than twenty years and has provided services such as job training, assistance in accessing public and private programs, and language and other services designed to assist immigrants to maneuver within the broader culture. The food stamp demonstration project undertaken by the Center was designed to disseminate information to immigrant communities that may have been underserved by the Food Stamp Program. The Center intended to enlist the help of the Hawaii social service agency and other community nonprofit agencies in the effort.

Information and client assistance was provided to five of the six originally targeted ethnic groups. The sixth group, Laotian, was dropped from the project because the immigration from Laos had all but halted. The information component of the project consisted of the development of various ads for dissemination in the phone book's yellow pages, local newspaper, and on the radio. Posters were also developed and disseminated. The project arranged for professional translation to be supplied below cost and subsequent re-translation by native speakers in the targeted communities to assure local comprehension. Client assistance provided by project counselors included help completing applications and obtaining documentation and the arrangement of translation services at the food stamp office. Project counselors also provided follow-up services.

Honolulu, Hawaii -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$48,892.00
1,681 contacts	=	\$29.09 per contact;
509 referrals	=	\$96.05 per referral;
509 applications	=	\$96.05 per applicant; and,
430 enrollments	=	\$113.70 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	25.9%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	84.5%

6. PROJECT BREAD-THE WALK FOR HUNGER, INC. BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

PARTNERS FOR EFFECTIVE CHANGE: A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP TO INCREASE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM OUTREACH IN FOUR COMMUNITIES AND FOUR TARGET POPULATIONS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Target Group(s):

- Elderly people (Worcester)
- Hispanics, primarily Puerto Ricans (Springfield)
- Asian Americans, primarily refugees from Cambodia (Lowell)
- Low-income working families, and recently unemployed people (Everett, Malden, and Medford)

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Stigma
- Illiteracy
- Lack of transportation
- Misinformation, lack of information about FSP
- Inconvenient food stamp office hours
- Discourteous treatment at the food stamp office
- Small amount of benefits compared with difficulty of application process

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Development of a public service video
- Partnership with the Massachusetts State Agency
- Partnership with other nonprofit organizations to provide client assistance
- A 1-800 number for information about food stamps
- Community meetings/focus groups
- Advocacy for specific clients at the local food stamp offices
- Food stamp materials development in several languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Cambodian)

Project Overview:

Project Bread is a non-profit corporation that serves Massachusetts residents with the goal of alleviating and ending hunger throughout the State. Project Bread had conducted a highly successful annual "Walk for Hunger" as its primary fund raising activity (\$3.5 million in 1994). These proceeds support some 375 soup kitchens, food pantries, and homeless shelter feeding programs throughout the State. Grants from the State Department of Public Health and Public Welfare (DPHPW) have allowed for the creation of a successful food stamp outreach program targeting low-income families, the recently unemployed, the working poor, and new minorities to the State. This program, primarily a statewide hotline, has been in operation since 1988.

Building on these prior activities, funding was provided to Project Bread to conduct outreach to four specific target population groups in four distinctive Massachusetts communities. The aim

of the project was to identify problems common to all potential food stamp applicants, while at the same time, identifying issues unique to each specific target group and setting. The project produced outreach materials in many languages and a video tape directed to the recently unemployed.

Boston, Massachusetts -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$200,000.00
1788 contacts	=	\$111.86 per contact;
718 referrals	=	\$278.55 per referral;
505 applications	=	\$396.04 per applicant; and,
232 enrollments	=	\$862.07 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	13%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	32.3%

**7. MISSISSIPPI ACTION FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION, INC.
GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI**

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Target Group(s):

- Rural low-income working families (African American)
- Elderly people

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of transportation
- Isolation and mistrust of the system
- Lack of information about the FSP
- Reluctance to visit food stamp offices because of local food stamp worker's attitudes

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Radio and newspaper announcements
- Presentations at community-based social and religious institutions
- Door-to-door canvassing and home visits
- Client advocacy at the local food stamp offices
- Authorized representatives
- Development of a coalition of nonprofit organizations to provide client assistance
- Ancillary services (i.e., transportation)

Project Overview:

Mississippi Action for Community Education Inc. (MACE), a nonprofit agency with a long history of community involvement, has provided technical assistance to rural communities in fourteen counties in western Mississippi. The agency primarily serves low income African American clients.

The food stamp demonstration project was a cooperative effort between MACE, the lead agency, and three of its affiliates. Project staff utilized direct door-to-door contacts and community outreach activities organized through social institutions, such as African American churches and community-based membership organizations, to identify individuals who were eligible for food stamp services and benefits. Each county had two client assistance workers who visited households, provided information about the program, and provided application assistance to clients interested in applying to the FSP.

Greenville, Mississippi -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$150,000.00
4861 contacts	=	\$30.86 per contact;
2404 referrals	=	\$63.40 per referral;
0 applications¹	=	\$N/A; and,
882 enrollments	=	\$170.07 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	18.1%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	36.7%

¹ These data were not collected.

8. EAST BLOOMFIELD CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT EAST BLOOMFIELD, NEW YORK

MIGRANT OUTREACH RECRUITMENT ENROLLMENT (MORE) PROJECT

Target Group(s):

- Migrant workers
- Rural low-income working families

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Stigma
- Lack of transportation
- Limited English proficiency
- Lack of information about the FSP
- Experiences with wrongful denial of expedited food stamps
- Administrative difficulties encountered by clients in food stamp offices

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Appointment setting with local food stamp offices for clients
- Food stamp materials development
- Door-to-door contacts and home visits
- Assistance provided at migrant camps
- Cooperation with state migrant education program

Project Overview:

The recipient of the grant for this project is the East Bloomfield School District, a public educational entity located in the western part of New York State about 40 miles southeast of Rochester, NY. The area in Western New York is primarily an agricultural region which requires the labor of migrants to support agriculture. Since 1974, the school district has been working with the State Education Office to identify and recruit migrant children for educational and support service programs managed by the Bureau of Migrant Education. The food stamp demonstration project worked in conjunction with other migrant education assistance projects, using their staff as client-assistance workers on a part-time basis.

The food stamp demonstration project has covered the cost of providing additional training to migrant recruiters about the operation of the FSP in New York State. These trained recruiters, as part of their duties, inform migrant families about the availability of the FSP, determine potential eligibility, and assist them to enroll in the program through the Department of Social Services (DSS) located in the local county. In effect, the project is a state-wide project serving migrants throughout most of New York State.

East Bloomfield, New York – Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$199,962.00
4015 contacts	=	\$49.80 per contact;
942 referrals	=	\$212.74 per referral;
365 applications	=	\$547.84 per applicant; and,
171 enrollments	=	\$1169.36 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	4.3%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	18.2%

**9. COMMUNITY FOOD RESOURCE CENTER
NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

**FOOD STAMP OUTREACH AND CLIENT
ASSISTANCE AT A MEDICAID-ONLY CENTER**

Target Group(s):

- Low-income working families
- Elderly people
- People with disabilities

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Stigma and pride
- Lack of knowledge/misinformation about the FSP
- Administrative difficulties in application process

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Food stamp materials development
- Advocacy through participation in hunger commissions within New York City
- Computer assisted pre-screening review of eligibility
- Interaction with food stamp office in application process

Project Overview:

The Community Food Resource Center (CFRC) was founded in 1980 in New York City as a nonprofit organization to address public issues of food availability, hunger, nutrition, and income support. The primary goal of CFRC is to increase access to nutritious food at a reasonable cost for the estimated 2 million New Yorkers living in poverty.

The food stamp demonstration project was a collaborative effort of CFRC and the Human Resources Administration (HRA) of New York City. Specifically, members of CFRC were assigned to a Medicaid office in Brooklyn, where Medicaid applicants were informed about food stamps and pre-screened regarding their potential eligibility. Prior experience on the part of CFRC staff indicated that a high percentage of Medicaid recipients, given their low income and high medical expenses, were eligible for food stamps. This project intended to demonstrate that a large percentage of persons participating in Medicaid were eligible for, but often did not participate in the FSP and that, if provided with information and application assistance, these clients would choose to participate.

New York City -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$80,604.00
3750 contacts	=	\$21.76 per contact;
2781 referrals	=	\$28.98 per referral;
2256 applications	=	\$35.72 per applicant; and,
1824 enrollments	=	\$44.19 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	48.6%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	65.6%

10. INTERRELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF CENTRAL NEW YORK SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

THE HELP SITE NETWORK: AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY TO INCREASE FOOD STAMP PARTICIPATION

Target Group(s):

- Elderly people
- Low-income working families
- Recently unemployed

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Stigma and pride
- Difficulty acquiring the proper documents for eligibility
- Lack of knowledge, misinformation about food stamps
- Small amount of benefits not worth the hassle of applying
- Difficulty in negotiating the social services bureaucracy

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Food stamp materials development
- Recruiting and training outreach volunteers
- Transportation
- Establishing outreach help sites in rural counties

Project Overview:

The InterReligious Council of Central New York (IRC), a nonprofit corporation founded in 1986 by religious denominations of all faiths, works on community issues of common concern in the central part of New York State. In 1992, the Council initiated a Syracuse-based Help Site manned by volunteers to assist households in the food stamp application process. Volunteers assisted needy households to qualify for food stamp benefits by disseminating application information, conducting pre-screening reviews, and providing application assistance at the local food stamp office. A review of this project's efficacy indicated that the households receiving this assistance were three times more likely to receive food stamps than those not availing themselves of these services.

The food stamp demonstration project was designed to establish additional "help sites" by recruiting and training local volunteers to conduct food stamp outreach in their local communities. The project intended for these volunteers to maintain an information resource base for providing direct client assistance for individuals applying for food stamp benefits.

Syracuse, New York -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$46,310.00
364 contacts	=	\$ 127.22 per contact;
180 referrals	=	\$ 257.28 per referral;
165 applications	=	\$ 280.67 per applicant; and,
0 enrollments ¹	=	\$N/A.

¹ These were not collected and verified.

**11. DOUGLAS-CHEROKEE ECONOMIC AUTHORITY, INC.
MORRISTOWN, TENNESSEE**

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH AND CLIENT ASSISTANCE

Target Group(s):

- Elderly people living in rural areas
- Homeless people
- Low-income working families with children

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of knowledge about FSP eligibility requirements
- Stigma/shame attached to being a food stamp recipient
- Inability to accurately complete application procedures
- Accessibility issues (i.e., transportation to food stamp office)

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Toll free telephone number and referral services
- Multi-media announcements
- Partnerships with other nonprofit organizations for client assistance
- Community presentations
- Case management services and advocacy for specific clients

Project Overview:

Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, Inc., is a grassroots community action agency committed to empowering the poor. Services provided by the agency are varied and include social and job skills development, general survival assistance and information, educational programs, and nutrition and other services for the elderly.

The primary activities that were implemented in the food stamp demonstration project included: 1) the development and dissemination of posters, pamphlets, and newspaper articles; and 2) the use of the agency's 1-800 telephone number. In addition, staff also made presentations to the community throughout the area. The method of outreach that generated the largest response was the 1-800 number, where interested individuals called and asked questions regarding the food stamp project. Staff then explained to these persons the application process and mailed an application package to those interested in applying for food stamps.

Morristown, Tennessee – Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$99,938.00
1807 contacts	=	\$55.31 per contact;
1072 referrals	=	\$93.22 per referral;
0 applications¹	=	\$N/A; and,
217 enrollments	=	\$460.54 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	12%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	20.2%

¹ These data were not collected.

**12: WEST TENNESSEE LEGAL SERVICES, INC.
JACKSON, TENNESSEE**

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH

Target Group(s):

- Elderly people (African American)
- Low-income working families

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of transportation and telephone services
- Stigma of being on food stamps
- Lack of literacy skills
- Intimidation in dealing with bureaucracies
- Difficulties in understanding FSP requirements

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Community education
- 1-800 number
- Distribution of flyers and posters
- Targeted assistance sites
- Telephone assistance
- Transportation
- Legal aid and advocacy for specific clients
- Volunteers

Project Overview:

West Tennessee Legal Services, Inc., (WTLS) is a nonprofit corporation that provides legal advocacy services for low income clients in rural West Tennessee. In addition to traditional legal representation, WTLS also provides services to senior citizens, access to medical care/treatment, family advocacy services, housing, etc. The food stamp demonstration project is a joint project between WTLS and Just Organized Neighborhood Association Headquarters (JONAH), a grassroots, rural, non-profit, community-based organization of low-income African American families.

The purpose of the demonstration project was to increase food stamp participation in rural, primarily minority, communities in West Tennessee. The project included three main components: 1) community education; 2) outreach/identification; and 3) legal advocacy. The community education component consisted of making presentations at various sites within the service area, distributing fliers, and publishing articles in various local newspapers. The agency also made available the use of a 1-800 telephone number where clients could call and speak to project staff. Outreach was primarily conducted by community volunteers. These volunteers also assisted clients with the food stamp application process; they provided clients with the address of the local DHS office and the necessary documentation needed for the food stamp interview. In terms of the legal

advocacy component, a WTLS attorney was available to provide legal counsel to assist clients who applied for food stamps, were turned down, but who may have needed to appeal a decision.

Jackson, Tennessee - Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$50,000.00
323 contacts	=	\$154.80 per contact;
198 referrals	=	\$252.53 per referral;
0 applications¹	=	\$N/A; and,
155 enrollments	=	\$322.58 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	47.9%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	78.3%

¹ These data were not collected.

13. THE DAILY PLANET RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

THE FOOD WORKS: OUTREACH ASSISTANCE TO HOMELESS PERSONS AND THE WORKING POOR

Target Group(s):

- Homeless people

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Poor communication skills
- Acquiring the proper documents for eligibility
- Difficulty in dealing with bureaucracies
- Lack of knowledge, misinformation about food stamps

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Advocacy for homeless clients
- Food stamp information dissemination
- Food stamp eligibility worker at shelter

Project Overview:

The Daily Planet is a private, nonprofit social service agency dedicated to serving "hard to reach" populations in the Richmond area, especially those persons who will not or cannot deal with the more established social service agencies. This organization has been in operation since 1969 and is considered by local city officials to be the leading provider of services to homeless people in the City of Richmond. Much of the agency's work over the years has sought to reach out to those in need (the homeless, working poor, substance abusers): providing short-term assistance for empowering people to get back on their feet, improve their quality of life, and reintegrate into the local community.

For the homeless in Richmond, Department of Social Services offices are often inaccessible. In addition to a lack of available transportation, DSS office hours prohibit access; they frequently close before those with day labor jobs can get to these offices. The food stamp demonstration project was designed to overcome these and other barriers of access. Project staff informed the homeless who were receiving services at the Daily Planet (e.g., mail drop, laundry, morning and evening meals, sack lunches for working men or women) of the FSP, provided pre-application assistance, and assisted local DSS staff to process eligible food stamp applicants at the shelter location.

Richmond, Virginia -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$69,524.00
8191 contacts	=	\$8.49 per contact;
583 referrals	=	\$119.25 per referral;
481 applications	=	\$144.54 per applicant; and,
442 enrollments¹	=	\$157.29 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	5.4%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	75.8%

¹ All of these were verified with DSS and 95 percent represented expedited cases.

**14. CENTRAL VERMONT COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.
BARRE, VERMONT**

Target Group(s):

- Low-income working families
- Elderly people

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Social stigma of being on government program
- Privacy
- Lack of information about the FSP

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Volunteers
- Door to door canvassing and home visits

Project Overview:

Project Hunger Action is a demonstration project designed by Central Vermont Community Action Council, Inc., a community action agency that serves a large part of the State. Originally, the project intended to build upon the agency's successful use of volunteers, who in the past have manned food banks and worked with other agency projects. The volunteers were to have been used to canvas small towns in three counties, in an attempt to locate hard-to-reach rural populations low-income persons eligible to enroll in the FSP.

The project never truly became functional. Getting a very late start due to a difficult winter, the project finally recruited volunteers, only to have many of them resign. The volunteers were uncomfortable going door-to-door and "intruding upon" people, and they did not get a positive response from community members. Of the few individuals the volunteers contacted, most said they were not interested in participating in the FSP.

It is not possible to ascertain with any certainty what barriers exist to accessing food stamps at this site, because so few people were contacted. Demographic information indicated that there was a population waiting to be served, food banks had been used by many over the years, and other indications of need existed. The project, as it was staffed, simply did not elicit useful information. This project did indicate that using volunteers in door-to-door canvassing is very difficult. Volunteer workers need attention and monitoring by staff if they are to remain interested and effective in their work.

Barre, Vermont -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$44,986.00
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The project was unable to conduct activities as planned, and as a result, cost figures are not relevant.

**15. FREMONT PUBLIC ASSOCIATION
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH TO RURAL AND URBAN HOMELESS

Target Group(s):

- Urban homeless people
- Rural homeless people
- Low-income working families

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Physical barriers to access
- Lack of information about food stamps
- Feelings of shame, fear, and resentment
- Illiteracy, complicated applications and language barriers

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Community meetings
- Food stamp materials development
- Food stamp information dissemination in state parks
- 1-800 number
- Authorized representative
- Client assistance and advocacy in shelters and feeding sites
- Development of a coalition with another nonprofit agency

Project Overview:

This demonstration project was a statewide effort undertaken to provide outreach to homeless individuals in Washington State's major urban center (Seattle) and in rural areas of Eastern Washington. This effort was coordinated by the Fremont Public Association (located in Seattle) with a sub-contract to the Northeast Washington Rural Resources Development Association operating out of Coleville, Washington. The Fremont Public Association (FPA) and the Northeast Washington Rural Resources Development Association (RRD) both operate as community action nonprofit agencies. The FPA was established in 1974; whereas the RRD has been in operation since 1964. Each organization works with the poor, the unemployed, and the homeless in their respective areas of operation.

Despite other outreach efforts in Washington, it was felt that more direct intervention efforts were needed via this demonstration project to overcome a number of barriers to accessing food stamps still being encountered by the homeless throughout the State. In Seattle, concerted efforts were made to reach the urban homeless population, whereas in Eastern Washington, outreach efforts were primarily focused on targeting families (and individuals) who used state parks and other facilities for temporary shelter. Client-assistance workers in both areas provided direct assistance to homeless clients; informing them of the availability of food stamps as a resource, assisting them in filling out their applications for this assistance, and directly

(whenever possible) submitting pre-screened materials to the local food stamp office for expedited review.

Seattle, Washington – Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount		
<u>Fremont Public Assoc.</u>	=	\$118,616.00
937 contacts	=	\$126.59 per contact;
613 referrals	=	\$193.50 per referral;
600 applications	=	\$197.69 per applicant; and,
264 enrollments	=	\$449.30 per each enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	28.2%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	43.1%
Grant Amount		
<u>Rural Resources Dev. Ass.</u>	=	\$ 38,600.00
339 contacts	=	\$113.86 per contact;
280 referrals	=	\$137.86 per referral;
276 applications	=	\$139.86 per applicant; and,
258 enrollments	=	\$149.61 per each enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	76.1%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	92.1%
Total (FPA/264) + (RRD/281) = 522	=	\$301.18 per each enrollment

**16: WESTERN DAIRYLAND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL, INC.
INDEPENDENCE, WISCONSIN**

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH

Target Group(s):

- Homeless people
- Rural elderly people
- Low-income working families

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Pride
- Lack of information regarding eligibility requirements
- Lack of transportation
- Difficult and intimidating nature of the application process

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Educational and informational campaign (multi-media, presentations)
- 1-800 number
- Alternative application sites
- Transportation
- Telephone assistance

Project Overview:

Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council, Inc., a community action agency, was established under the Economic Opportunity Act to help people in four of Wisconsin's western counties alleviate poverty-related problems. The agency's mission, to create opportunities that help people become self-sufficient, is achieved through the provision of direct services that meet both immediate and long-term developmental needs of clients.

The food stamp demonstration project consisted of two major components: 1) an educational and informational campaign; and 2) food stamp application assistance. The educational and informational campaign focused on presenting food stamps in a positive light and on providing people with information regarding eligibility. Fliers, brochures, and posters were developed and distributed throughout the service area, and articles were published in local newspapers and shopper magazines. Other educational/ informational efforts consisted of community presentations at various outreach sites. Client assistance was primarily provided by phone. Clients could call a 1-800 number, ask questions regarding the FSP, and receive an application, with instructions, through the mail. Staff provided assistance in the home at the request of clients.

Independence, Wisconsin -- Cost per Unit Figures

Grant Amount	=	\$147,000.00
538 contacts	=	\$273.23 per contact;
360 referrals	=	\$408.33 per referral;
0 applications¹	=	\$N/A; and,
111 enrollments	=	\$1324.32 per each new enrollment.
Contact/enrollment rate	=	20.6%
Referral/enrollment rate	=	30.8%

¹ These data were not collected.

APPENDIX

FOOD STAMP CLIENT ENROLLMENT ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT SUMMARIES

2. ONGOING PROJECTS

**17: FOOD BANK OF NORTH CENTRAL ARKANSAS
NORFORK, ARKANSAS**

FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAM

Target Group(s):

- Rural elderly people
- Low-income working families

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Isolation and lack of transportation
- Inaccurate information
- Illiteracy
- Distrust of system
- Insufficient hours of operation (local food stamp office)
- Complexity of food stamp application

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Public information campaign (articles in local newspapers)
- Collaboration with other nonprofit agencies
- Client assistance provided at targeted sites
- Advocacy for rural clients
- Telephone assistance
- Community education and application assistance
- Home visits

Project Overview:

The Foodbank of North Central Arkansas, a community-based nonprofit agency, operates eight different programs under one umbrella. These include a foodbank serving 60 pantries, senior centers, on-site feeding programs, a community gardening program, and a number of other services directed to helping the poor, elderly, mentally and/or physically disabled, chemically dependent, and youth.

The Foodbank of North Central Arkansas, working collaboratively with the Baxter County Office of the Arkansas Department of Human Services on the food stamp demonstration project, targeted elderly individuals, low-income working families with children, and individuals and families in a rural area of the Ozarks. Project staff, who operated out of the local food bank, distributed information about the program through fliers and newspaper advertisements, and also made presentations at various outreach sites. Staff also explained the food stamp application process to clients and assisted them in filling out application forms. Home visits were provided upon client request.

**18. SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

NON ASSISTANCE FOOD STAMP OUTREACH PROGRAM

Target Group(s):

- Low-income working families
- Non-English-speaking minorities

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of information about the FSP
- Language difficulties
- Work and child care schedules which make scheduling intake interviews difficult
- Long lines and delays at food stamp offices that are co-located with general assistance
- Feeling stigmatized or shamed about using a government program
- Fear of jeopardizing immigration status
- Difficulty completing application forms
- Difficulty obtaining and reproducing needed documentation

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Training of personnel of local, non-profit agencies in food stamp eligibility criteria
- Pre-screening, client assistance, and assistance in securing proper documentation
- Scheduling of appointments at SFDSS
- Client advocacy
- Partnerships with nonprofit associations

Project Overview:

The San Francisco Department of Social Services (SFDSS), the lead agency in the Non-Assistance Food Stamp Outreach Program, has had its own Food Stamp Outreach Program in operation since January 1993. The primary target populations to date have been the elderly, disabled, and homeless in San Francisco and the surrounding areas. The food stamp demonstration project targeted low-income families with children in the same area.

SFDSS, together with the Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, trained intake staff and counselors at six local, non-profit agencies that specialized in family and child crisis intervention, to identify and help families who were eligible to access food stamps. The project was designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of providing enrollment assistance through referral agencies, Healthy Start programs, and family crisis intervention agencies. Through client assistance provided at these agencies, the project intended to reach low income families from different ethnic backgrounds and provide them with information about the food stamp program and pre-application assistance.

**19. CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT TRAINING
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA**

CET FOOD STAMP OUTREACH PROJECT

Target Group(s):

- Low income working families
- Non-English-speaking minorities (Hispanic)

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Language
- Lack of knowledge of FSP
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of child care

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- 1-800 number
- Language-specific informational materials
- Language-specific multi-media announcements
- Information provided at grantee site, door-to-door, community organizations
- Pre-screening assistance and assistance in filling out food stamp applications
- Transportation
- Training other nonprofit organizations about food stamp benefits

Project Overview:

The Center for Employment (CET) is a training institute that is well recognized and is currently under contract to distribute food stamps in Santa Clara County. Building on this contract, CET, in collaboration with SCDSS, developed the outreach demonstration project. CET hired two client assistance workers to work on the demonstration project and also trained agency personnel regarding food stamp regulations so that they could assist clients with the pre-application process.

Project activities included the following: 1) disseminating correct information about food stamp eligibility through the media, presentations at community organizations and CET sites, and verbally through face-to-face neighborhood contacts; 2) maintaining a toll-free telephone line (and voice mail) to provide further information; 3) helping to translate, pre-screen, and complete application forms; and, 4) helping clients access the food stamp office by providing transportation and/or childcare.

**20. D.C. HUNGER ACTION
WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

PROJECT OUTREACH

Target Group(s):

- Elderly people
- People with AIDS who have become disabled

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of information about the FSP
- Difficulty in traveling to the food stamp office
- Difficulty in filling out application for food stamps
- Difficulty in providing documentation for application

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- The production of informational materials
- Use of AmeriCorps participants to provide on-site information and client assistance at senior centers and senior living facilities
- Individual home visits
- Information provided to agencies working with AIDS populations
- Advocacy for specific clients with the local food stamp agency
- Application delivery
- Telephone assistance
- Providing elderly and disabled clients with information on telephone intake interviews

Project Overview:

D.C. Hunger Action, an advocacy agency that has developed out of other "hunger lobby" groups, was a grantee under both the first and second round of funding for Food Stamp Outreach Demonstration Projects. The second project was two-pronged; targeting both the elderly and the HIV/AIDS populations.

The first part of the new project used AmeriCorps volunteers to conduct informational outreach and to provide prescreening, preapplication, and documentation assistance for the elderly in the District of Columbia. Volunteers also delivered completed applications to the food stamp office. A paid outreach worker made home visits to the elderly upon request. The second part of this project used paid client assistance workers to provide information, prescreening and other assistance to persons who were HIV positive. Two workers who were familiar with this community through their previous work with AIDS patients and at-risk populations provided information about the demonstration project to a network of local agencies. These workers then took calls from individual clients and provided client assistance services in the home.

21. CAMBODIAN ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT PROJECT

Target Group(s):

- Low-income working families
- Non-English-Speaking Minorities (Refugees from Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos and Vietnam and Chinese Americans)

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of information concerning the FSP
- Language and communication barriers

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Community education
- Advocacy for clients
- Home visits
- Language-specific assistance
- Translation of outreach materials
- Partnership with other nonprofit organizations to provide client assistance
- On-site application assistance within community agencies
-

Project Overview:

The Cambodian Association of Illinois worked collaboratively on the food stamp demonstration project with the Chinese Mutual Aid Association, Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago, Lao American Community Services, and the Vietnamese Association of Illinois. The focus of the project was to assist refugees and immigrants to access the food stamp program. Each agency contributed a client assistance worker to the project to conduct outreach activities. These activities included making presentations and distributing information at local community events and at the collaborating agencies. In addition to providing information about food stamps, the client assistance workers provided preapplication assistance either at the client's home or in one of the agencies' offices. Staff also accompanied clients to the food stamp office, if requested.

22. PENQUIS COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY BANGOR, MAINE

REACHING THE ELDERLY AND POOR

Target Group(s):

- Elderly people
- Low-income working families

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Geographic isolation
- Community disapproval of government assistance

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Telephoning people receiving heating assistance to determine whether they would be interested in applying for food stamps
- Home visits
- Development of a coalition of nonprofit agencies to provide client assistance

Project Overview:

Penquis Community Action Agency has been helping people in their area to access the heating assistance program available to low-income people for some years. Working with three other community service organizations on the food stamp demonstration project, Penquis Community Action Agency provided outreach to elderly and low-income people who received heating assistance. Together, the four agencies covered most of the area of the State.

Staff from the demonstration project reviewed records of those who have received heating assistance and located those who did not receive food stamps. (This information was available on the heating application and has been entered into the computer database.) Workers then contacted each of the persons on the list who did not receive food stamps and asked them whether they would consider accessing food stamps if they were in need of this kind of help.

23. COMMUNITY FOOD RESOURCE CENTER NEW YORK, NEW YORK

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH AND CLIENT ASSISTANCE

Target Group(s):

- Elderly people
- Low-income working families

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Stigma and pride
- Lack of qualifying documents for application
- Difficult administrative application procedures
- Lack of knowledge/misinformation about FSP

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Community presentations
- Appointment scheduling
- Food stamp materials development
- Collocation with public agencies
- Computer assisted pre-screening

Project Overview:

The Community Food Resource Center (CFRC), a non-profit organization founded in 1980 in New York City to address public issues of food availability, hunger, nutrition, and income support, was a grantee under both the first and second round of funding for Food Stamp Outreach Demonstration Projects. Under the second round of funding, client assistance workers provided outreach to populations(s) that were likely to qualify for food stamps, such as the working poor, unemployed, and the elderly.

Staff were placed at unemployment offices, public utility offices, and senior citizen centers where outreach activities were conducted to enroll eligible individuals in the FSP. Interested persons were screened on-site by client assistance workers using laptop computers. Workers then completed applications for immediate submission to local food stamp offices, where program specialists finalized the application process. The project intended to demonstrate by using these procedures, that outreach can be a cost effective process reaching relatively large numbers of persons in a timely, efficient, and effective manner.

24. OUTSIDE IN PORTLAND, OREGON

FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

Target Group(s):

- Homeless youth (under age 21)

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Difficulty acquiring the proper documents for eligibility
- Administrative difficulties encountered when applying for food stamps
- Lack of knowledge, misinformation about FSP

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Direct client assistance
- Food stamp information dissemination
- On-site client screening and processing
- Intervention as necessary with food stamp offices

Project Overview:

Outside In is an inner city nonprofit social service agency that has been serving low-income individuals and families since 1968. In recent years, the agency has begun to provide food and shelter to an increasing homeless youth population in the downtown area of Portland.

Most of the youths involved in Outside In are unaware that they may be eligible for food stamp benefits. The food stamp demonstration project was designed to inform and encourage homeless youths to apply for food stamps. Project staff developed materials for distribution to these homeless young people and a client assistance worker concentrated on making contact with these young people at local restaurants, feeding sites, and local food pantries. The local food stamp office was committed to this project and has provided an eligibility worker to work on-site at Outside In one day a week to process applications, thereby greatly facilitating and expediting the dispersal of food stamps to homeless youth.

**25. GREEN THUMB
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA**

GREEN THUMB FOOD FOR HEALTH

Target Group(s):

- Rural elderly people

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of correct information about FSP
- Lack of transportation and/or access to a telephone
- Distrust or fear of government bureaucracy
- Homebound due to age or infirmity
- Perceived welfare stigma of receiving food stamps
- Lack of centralized location to apply for benefits
- Lack of fluency in English

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- 1-800 number
- Develop and distribute printed materials emphasizing nutrition and food stamp information
- Multi-media information
- Community presentations and focus groups
- Individual client assistance at home or other site
- Peers as client-assistance workers and counselors
- Transportation
- Authorized representatives
- Computerized screening with portable computers

Project Overview:

Green Thumb, Inc., began operation thirty years ago as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty. Green Thumb addresses the employment needs of older, low-income, rural Americans through the provision of job training opportunities and other community services. The food stamp demonstration project, a combined effort of Green Thumb, the South Dakota Department of Social Services Office of Adult Services and Aging, and the Department of Social Services Food Stamp Office, targeted elderly individuals in 10 counties of South Dakota.

Potential clients were located in various ways, including through a search of commercial marketing lists of older persons, which were purchased by the project. Other outreach activities included informational activities such as public service and media announcements, group presentations, and face-to-face outreach in community centers and homes. Once potential clients were located, three senior citizen client assistance workers and the project director were involved in providing pre-application screening and pre-application assistance. Outreach staff used portable printers and computers that were loaded with specially designed BOSS software, a software that included the South Dakota food stamp application as well as information on other programs in which clients may be eligible to participate.

26. FOODBANK OF SOUTHEASTERN VIRGINIA NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

LOAVES PROGRAM

Target Group(s):

- Low-income working families
- Rural elderly people

Barriers and Deterrents to Participation:

- Lack of transportation
- Fear of sharing personal information
- Lack of motivation due to small amount of benefits

Methods of Outreach/Client Assistance:

- Community education through presentations
- Announcements in local newspapers and on the radio
- Targeted application sites
- Home visits
- Client advocacy
- Partnerships with nonprofit organizations
- Transportation
- Volunteers

Project Overview

The Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia, the grant recipient, worked collaboratively with the Foodbank of the Eastern Shore on the food stamp demonstration project. The project targeted elderly and low-income working families in Accomack County, using senior citizen volunteers to staff the project.

Volunteers conducted outreach activities at sites where the poor and elderly might gather (i.e., food pantries, medical centers, and local discount stores). Potential clients were introduced to, and encouraged to participate in, the SHARE program: a program that provides food at a greatly reduced cost in exchange for volunteer hours and community services. Using the SHARE program as an incentive, volunteers explained how clients could maximize their food dollars by combining two nutritional programs: SHARE and the food stamp program. Volunteers then presented information regarding the FSP and provided application assistance to those interested in applying.